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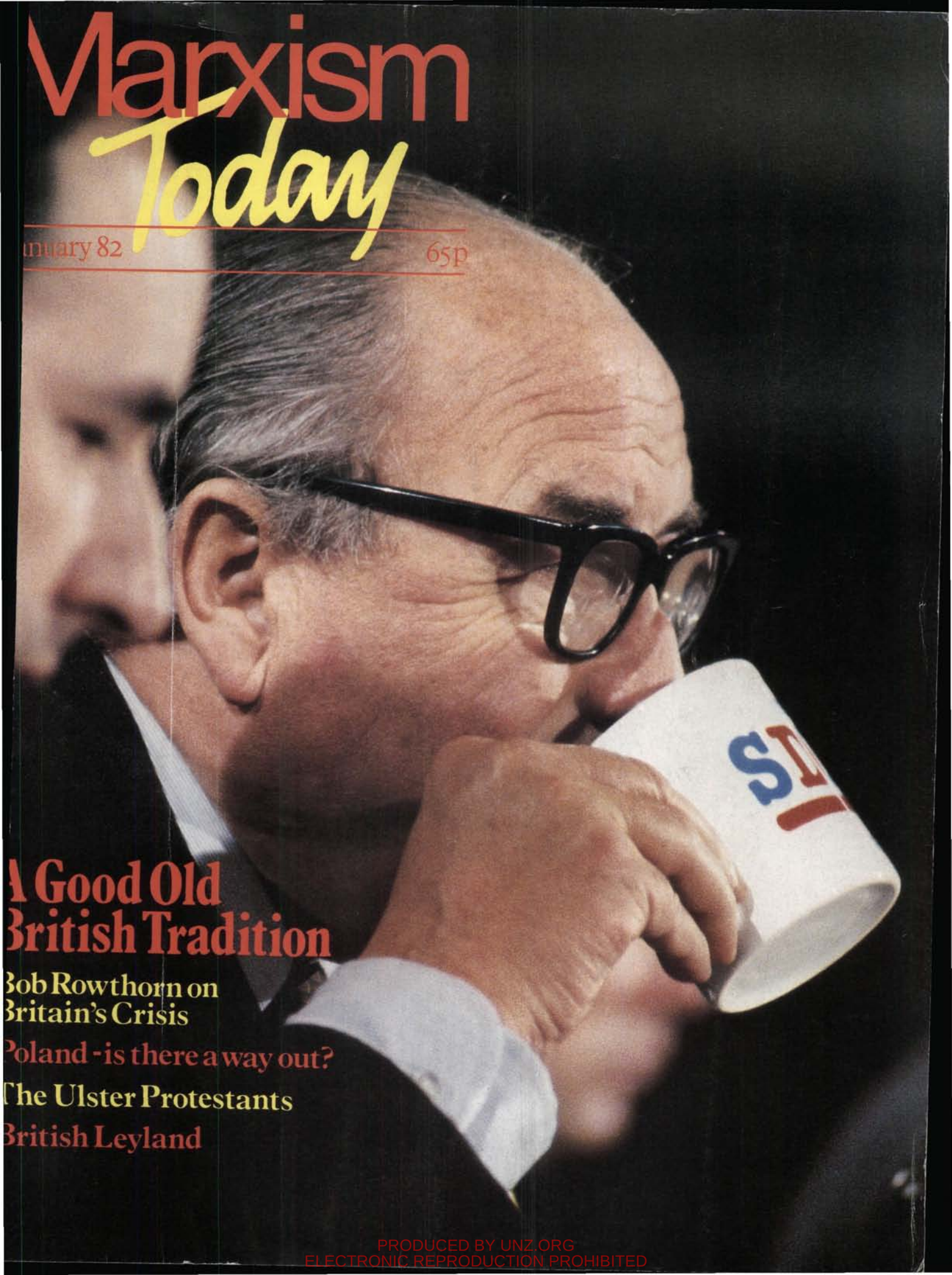

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## CBI

You would not expect British business to be monolithic in its views on politics and society. And neither is it.

The CBI conference in Eastbourne early in November demonstrated with a surprising clarity that the major fissure in business ranks lies along the stratum of industrial relations law. The 'wet' and 'dry' division inside the Tory cabinet and Party had its counterpart in Eastbourne's conference hall.

This year's CBI was obsessed with industrial relations and pay: its first message, on the Sunday before the two-day event got underway, was that some 250,000 workers had foregone their annual pay rises, because of their employers' problems. More than half of these worked for British Airways or British Steel: the remainder were heavily concentrated in West Midlands engineering companies. 'If you haven't earned the money you can't pay it out,' intoned Sir Raymond Pennock, the CBI President at the opening press conference.

Indeed. Outside the chamber in what the delegates liked to call the real world, Sir Michael Edwardes, chairman of BL and manager of large amounts of no money, was facing the roughest test of his three-year stint. He had offered his 58,000 manual workers 3.8% on basic rates and told them to take it or he would close the plants. Fed up with years of such threats, and with seeing themselves slip remorselessly down the earnings league, the BL workers had rejected it.

On the Sunday during which Sir Raymond was giving the country the benefits of his sentiments, Edwardes and union leaders had agreed (though opinions, especially within the Transport and General Workers Union, differ on how far that agreement went) on a marginally improved package which kept the basic rate increase at 3.8% but pushed up the premium rates and guaranteed a £3.75 bonus.

In the two days of the conference, BL workers remained on strike until the vote was taken on Wednesday morning. As CBI delegates called for wage restraint, pickets showed their wage slips on television: take-home pay of £70 for a semi-skilled worker with a mortgage and a growing family was commoner than most believed.

On the day after the conference ended, the BL vote went narrowly against continuing the action (though a week later, the Metro lines closed down as workers protested against a cut in their break time). Edwardes *had* won again: the fear of unemployment was too vivid in the West Midlands, the alternatives available to workers too nebulous. Unemployment and fear were his allies, out there in the real world.

Back in the warm of the Eastbourne centre, the morality play of Edwardes versus the workers was regarded in different lights by different delegates. There was a strong 'wet' lobby who didn't like confrontation: they called for a new 'action group' to be formed with the TUC which would address itself specifically to reducing unemployment. Mr Chris Walliker of the Delta Group and Mr Rowland Long of International Harvester both opposed legislation: Walliker thought it 'would come from the extreme Right', and begged Norman Tebbit, the new Employment Secretary not to 'put as much emphasis on the closed shop as the Conservative Associations of Cheltenham or Ascot do'. (In vain, Mr Walliker!). Long was even more radical: he said it would be reprehensible of the Government to use a surfeit of industrial relations legislation as a diversion from the consequences of adherence to a 'rigid piece of economic dogma'.

Mr Anthony Frodsham, director general of the Engineering Employers Federation and doyen of employer negotiators, smoothly intervened to say he was sure that Mr Tebbit would continue the step by step approach mapped out by his predecessor, Mr James Prior. (Mr Frodsham is consistent: after Tebbit's legislation appeared — legislation which for the first time in 75 years exposes union funds to liability — he *congratulated* Mr Tebbit on his step by step approach).

But the 'wets' were not to be allowed to drip unattended: on Tuesday, Mr Sayne Vernon of Ash and Lacy said that the previous day's speeches on industrial relations had been monopolised by the 'soft-centre Left': *he*, hard centred man that he took himself to be, wanted a law to allow workers to sue their unions for loss of earning sustained during a strike. (Mr Vernon clearly regards his christian name as an embarrassment and does his best to disprove it).

Three weeks later, of course, the delegates got some of what some of them wanted. Few stormed into print or on the media to denounce Tebbit's legislative proposals: the CBI, indeed, welcomed them heartily.

So did the evident split in the ranks mean nothing? Was it merely seaside rhetoric? (After all, the CBI conference decides nothing and commits no-one).

It would be unwise to assume so: for two reasons. First, Tebbit, too, inhabits the real world. As Prior was fond of saying, industrial relations law framed by a Tory government depends on employers to take the initiative — to sue a union, for example — and the experience of Heath's 1971 Industrial Relations Act showed few were fighting to get to the barricades first. If the employers, or many of them, are genuinely reluctant to back Tebbit, his laws will not work and he knows it.

Second, the employers, like everyone else, have another party to back now, something they have not had before. The Social Democratic Party remains too left for many of them, but suits as many more: its continuing successes are attracting serious business interest, and its clear endorsement of the need for profits, and of a mixed economy with little, if any, more state companies is perfectly acceptable to the more liberal industrialists and bankers. In this respect, the Tory Party's relationship with business closely resembles that of the Labour Party's with the trade unions: both need each other, but neither party can take the grass roots support of its adherents for granted. As Labour sees working class votes going to the SDP, so the Tories could see business money being redirected towards the same party.

We can expect, therefore, the 'wet' strain in business to become somewhat more vocal, especially if the new employment legislation is shown to be unworkable or ineffective. And we can expect *next* year's CBI conference to demonstrate how far that strain has grown.

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## FITZGERALD'S CRUSADE

The recent escalation of tension in Northern Ireland has dimmed for the forseeable future the hopes raised by Garret Fitzgerald's constitutional crusade for a gradual reconciliation of the two opposed religious and political traditions.

The decisive factor in starting the present crisis was not just the murder of the Rev Robert Bradford MP. That was only one, albeit more dramatic, example of a larger switch in IRA tactics from attacking British Army personnel to slowly and deliberately picking off UDR, UDA and RUC members. But if Protestant anger was already intense, the Bradford killing pushed it up to boiling point. As a direct result Fitzgerald's political initiative — at first welcomed by some Official Unionist leaders — was summarily shoved off the Northern political agenda.

This has been accompanied by a major shift in attitudes to the IRA south of the border. During their flirtation with a humanitarian and more conventional political image at the time of the hunger strike they secured a significant electoral foothold, winning two seats in the Dail (Parliament) one of which they still hold.

That support is now being submerged beneath bitter criticism of them in the South for stoking the fires of Protestant hostility. The tension they generated during the hunger strike is also blamed for the collapse of the lucrative Irish tourist industry, the second biggest after farming. In 1981, for the first time in decades, more was spent by Irish abroad than by visitors to the country.

But the present turmoil is unlikely to permanently defeat the Irish government's attempt to bury the sectarian hatchet. In fact it appears to be the only ray of hope around, in that it clearly signals to the Northern Unionists that the IRA cannot be equated in any way with Southern mainstream politics.

An essential ingredient of the Dublin olive branch has been a candid willingness to face up to prejudiced views on its own doorstep. In an outspoken interview launching his campaign to reform the Irish constitution and smooth relations with the North, Garret Fitzgerald said: 'There has been created a state which is unacceptable to Northern Unionists. Were I a Protestant I would find it difficult to want to join with it.' He also hit out at the laws, practices and attitudes that reflect a 'majority ethos', such as the Family Planning Act passed by the last administration which allows contraception for married couples only.

Fitzgerald is keen to destroy the belief that Catholic doctrine should somehow have a determining influence over social policy. It is this alleged bias that is behind his assertion that Ireland is a 'sectarian state.'

The specific areas he has identified for reform are the constitutional clauses claiming jurisdiction over the North and banning divorce. He has intimated that a referendum will be held on his proposals to reform these clauses after a full debate has taken place, and presumably when he feels his support is secure. That time may not be so far away: a recent opinion poll published in a Dublin daily paper revealed that 48% of Irish people questioned across the whole of the Republic favoured changes in the claim over the six counties, while only 30% opposed them.

Opposition leaders mounted a vigorous rearguard action against the 'crusade', though Charles Haughey, the Fianna Fail leader and Taoiseach (prime minister) till last June, sounded less than convincing in his statement that some reform might be desirable in the future but was out of the question now.

Haughey draws his support firstly from banging the drum of traditional republican rhetoric and secondly from identifying closely with Catholic doctrine. Along with Catholic bishops he has set himself firmly against changes in divorce laws. Other Fianna Fail politicians, such at the fervently nationalistic Sile de Valera, grand-daughter of the state's founder, have sought to make the claim over the North an issue of great political principle.

Support for the constitutional crusade seems to transcend class boundaries. One of the legacies of Irish history is a political system based less on a Left/Right cleavage than the split in the republican movement at the time of partition. As a consequence both main parties have an inter-class social base.

The banner of the small Irish Left in the

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Dail is carried by the moderate Labour Party, now weaker than at any time since the fifties, and three socialist TDs (MPs) — two independent and one representing Sinn Fein — The Workers Party (SFWP). Support for Fitzgerald's secularisation of the state has been warm to enthusiastic from this quarter.

While not directly involved in political decision-making, Catholic bishops still make their presence felt in the debate. The church in the past has tended to define the parameters of change it will accept. Politicians, afraid of the influence it holds at the grass roots, try not to offend it. Related to this is the strong emotional tie many Irish still feel to the Catholic Church.

Though the independents gave the Fine—Gael/Labour coalition only till this month (January) to prove itself, the probability is that it will survive long enough to push through constitutional changes. After the covert behaviour of the Haughey government, Fitzgerald has won respect for his honest and open approach. It seems unlikely therefore that the independents will wish to unseat him now. Relying on a slim majority, Fitzgerald has been careful not to alienate them, notably by not pushing through a tough incomes policy.

To an extent there is also an ideological accord with the Left — Fitzgerald represents the Social Democratic Left in Fine Gael and is respected for his emphasis on campaigning against poverty.

The coalition will face a stern test when a by-election is held for the constituency of the dead hunger striker Kieran Doherty. The Cavan-Monaghan seat could well go to Fianna Fail leaving the Coalition with a wafer-thin majority.

However a fourth independent, the Speaker, Dr John O'Connell, has blocked the by-election temporarily on a technicality. In the long term the survival of a Fitzgerald government will be an asset to Northern Ireland Secretary James Prior's attempts to defuse sectarian tension in the North.

## LORD DENNING

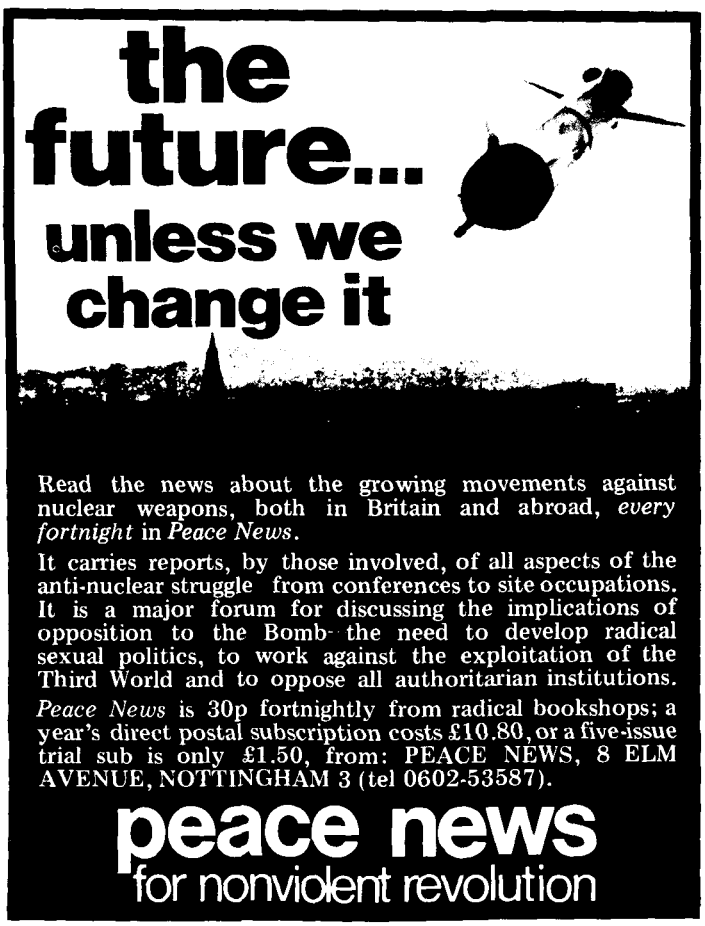
And the Lord said:

> '. . . The new council — that is, the local authority — rely on the result of the May election. They say that the issue was put plainly before the electorate. The new council consider that they have a mandate for postponing the old council's proposals and that they are morally bound to honour that mandate if they can legitimately do so.
>
> . . . It seems to me that in considering whether they are acting unreasonably or not there are many considerations to be borne in mind besides those expressly mentioned by the minister. There is the mandate itself which the council believe they have obtained from the electorate.
>
> . . . All things considered, I do not find any evidence on which the minister could declare himself satisfied that they had acted or were proposing to act unreasonably.'

The Lord in question was Lord Denning. He wasn't delivering judgement on the GLC councillors this time, but on the Tameside councillors, whom you may remember. They were the newly elected Tories who were trying to halt their Labour predecessors' move to comprehensive education; the Secretary of State for Education had deemed their conduct unreasonable and ordered them to get on with the changeover; the appeal courts, Denning in the van, held that no minister could deem such conduct unreasonable.

Consistency has never been one of Denning's failings. The Clay Cross councillors, whom you may also remember, had in 1974 pointed out to Denning that *they* had been elected on a manifesto pledging no rent increases. Manifesto indeed, said Denning:

> 'The councillors made this excuse: they claimed that they had been elected mainly on their hous-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ing policies and had pledged not to carry out any measures such as were contained in the Act. They considered therefore, that they had a clear moral obligation to carry out their pledges.

. . . To my mind their plain obligation, moral as well as legal, was to carry out the duties imposed on them by law. They do not escape this obligation by saying that they were elected for the purpose — by electors to whom they gave false pledges — pledges which they knew or ought to have known they could not fulfil.

The principal virtue which the English legal system has traditionally boasted is its consistency. A system of binding precedent requires the courts to apply identical principles of law to all cases without regard to the consequences. Anatole France long ago pointed out one aspect of the principle in a class-divided society:

'The law in its impartial majesty forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets and to steal bread.'

Denning is obsessed with its obverse — that equality before the law implies equal treatment for all those who claim their rights, including students, squatters, prisoners, immigrants, trade unionists, socialists . . . in fact the whole army of subversives who invade the secure world of the good and godly as the wild-woodders invaded Toad Hall. In our generation it is Denning, with a few stalwart yeomen at his back, who has taken it on himself to drive them from the seat of justice.

In order to overturn a principle as fundamental as the law of precedent, it has of course been necessary to invent a counter-principle. Denning himself puts it this way:

'Whenever there is a choice, choose the meaning which accords with reason and justice.'

Very fair, if you happen to share Denning's view of what is reasonable and just. But Denning's opinions on the questions which come into his court have been more and more openly displayed in recent years as illiberal, authoritarian, racist and reactionary.

The problem for socialists is that most of what Denning says about the system of precedent is true:

'The principles of law laid down by the judges in the 19th century . . . are not suited to the social necessities and social opinion of the 20th century. They should be moulded and shaped to meet the needs and opinions of today.'

Where the ways part is when it comes to deciding what today's needs and opinions are. Denning, naturally, thinks they are his and those of his class. Increasing numbers of citizens beg to differ, as case by case it becomes more plain that Denning's reputation as a liberal and a friend of the oppressed is a stalking horse for some of the most benighted views and attitudes to be found in modern Britain.

Denning has been on the bench now for well over 30 years. In his first spell in the Court of

Appeal during the 1950s he was responsible for some impressive breakthroughs in the law, bringing a number of aspects of it into line with what any rational person would regard as the requirements of justice. It is during the 1960s and 1970s that his judgments have come to sound more and more like *Daily Telegraph* leaders and to read more and more like *Sun* editorials, as his appeals for 'reason and justice' are broadcast to the public from the bench. Lawyers, who by and large consider him now to be an embarrassment, generally put it down to the obduracy of old age. But a look back will reveal that Denning's social and political barometer has been functioning admirably over the years, and his notions of reason and justice have become increasingly repressive as the needle has moved over to 'stormy'. In the 1960s, for instance, in the wake of Donovan, he was prepared to temper union-bashing with a serious attempt to incorporate strikes within the law (in order to control them, to be sure). Since the rejection of 'In Place of Strife' and the opposition to Heath's Industrial Relations Act, he has seen that the chips are down: for ten years now Denning's judgments and writings have openly crusaded both against trade unions and against the legislation passed to protect them from the judges.

In that same period, litigation to assert or protect certain basic rights for squatters, students, immigrants and prisoners has time after time foundered on Denning's unconcealed bigotry. A sort of flexi-law has developed, a process of reasoning which, instead of going down the traditional road from facts to law to result, starts from the desired result and proceeds via a suitably highlighted version of the facts to whatever proposition of law, old or new, is necessary to sustain the foregone conclusion.

Denning continues to set the labour movement a series of short term problems, many of them acute but all of them soluble by constitutional means. It is worth pondering, also, whether he does not pose some troubling long term problems. The judges administering the law of a socialist society might well be expected to be handed a minimum of written law and left to get on withthe job of deciding each case as reason and justice demanded. Denning's reign in the Court of Appeal raises some nagging doubts. If there is to be no precedent and little fixed law, the judge's own opinion of the right result becomes unassailable. Hand it to a jury and, however popular the decision, it will be even less regulated by the law. One of the most taxing jobs of a socialist society is going to be the translation of today's half-empty slogan of equality before the law into a reality. Without principle and consistency, can there be such equality? And is a card-carrying Comrade Denning necessarily going to be the right way to achieve it?

*Contributors:* **Bill Nicholls, Alan Murdoch, Keith Jones.**

## Stop Press

### The Polish Crisis

The declaration of martial law in Poland on December 13 dashed the hopes for a historic compromise discussed in this issue in the article on Poland, which went to press on December 1. The analysis of Poland's political and economic crisis made in it still retains its validity. The authoritarian scenario outlined there has now come about with power passing into the hands of a Military Council. With the introduction of draconian penalties for strikers, the suppression of trade union rights and activities, and the imprisonment without charge of a considerable number of Solidarity leaders, the process of democratisation initiated by the workers' struggles of August 1980 has been rolled back.

The escalation of social tensions immediately preceding this was ushered in by the decision of the PUWP leadership to introduce emergency legislation including a temporary ban on strikes. Faced with the loss of gains granted in the Gdansk Agreement, the Solidarity leadership responded with a policy of confrontation, threatening to organise a national stoppage and a national referendum about establishing a provisional government.

Poland, tragically, has now entered a new and dangerous stage of military rule, the consenquences of which will become clearer in the following days and weeks, and which will require analysis in a subsequent issue of *Marxism Today*.

**Monty Johnstone,** December 14

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Bob Rowthorn

# The Past Strikes Back

**Britain's postwar decline is dramatic. Thatcherism represents a new kind of response to it. But what would an SDP/ Liberal Alliance mean?**

photo: Chris Davies/Network

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It is a common place to point out that Britain's present crisis is the culmination of more than a hundred years of economic decline, during which her position as the world's leading industrial power has been destroyed, and that her economy is now one of the weakest in Western Europe. The prospect of such a decline, and its consequences for the British people, were already clear to such writers as J A Hobson at the end of the last century, and have been a familiar theme of commentators ever since. Despite such warnings however, governments have been unwilling to confront the problem of decline or to act decisively so as to halt it.

The British state has displayed an extraordinary passivity and incapacity in the face of growing economic difficulties, and has never seriously pursued a concerted modernising strategy of the kind implemented, on occasion, in countries such as France or Japan. This is true even in the post war period when, apart from a brief flirtation with the idea of planning, governments have not even tried to develop a coherent and positive programme for the regeneration of British industry, nor to create the kind of civil service and state apparatus required to implement such a programme.

The hesitant and ineffectual character of government policy since the war is the outcome of a particular balance of class forces in Britain during this period. Capital has in general been opposed to a policy of vigorous planning and detailed state intervention in industry, whilst the working class has lacked the consciousness or unity of purpose to impose such a policy. The reasons for capitalist 'opposition' are both economic and political. On a political level, most capitalists are frightened of any really determined and coherent policy to modernise industry and plan its development. They believe that such a policy is the thin end of the wedge and, if successful, would legitimise socialist ideas in popular consciousness, and give rise to pressure for more radical forms of state intervention, or even for outright expropriation. Such a belief is well-founded and reflects a sound appreciation of the way in which capital maintains its hegemony in British society. Britain is a highly proletarianised country. It has a small petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry disappeared long ago, and the bulk of the population consists of wage and salary earners and their dependents. There is a strong trade union movements and, until recently, a substantial proportion of the working class supported the Labour Party. Ever since 1918 this party has been formally committed to the establishment of a socialist society, based on the 'common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange', and there has always been a significant element in the trade unions and Labour Party who take this commitment seriously. Given the numerical importance of the working class, the very existence of such a strong and potentially radical labour movement has posed a permanent threat to the continued survival of capitalism in Britain.

One of the main political objectives of the capitalist class has always been to contain this movement and to isolate its more radical elements. To achieve this objective capital has been forced to forgo the economic advantages of certain kinds of state intervention because their success would legitimise socialist ideas and strengthen the Left within the labour movement and society at large. Planning and nationalisation, for example, are widely associated with socialism in the public mind, and they have either been opposed outright by capital — or else, where such measures have been unavoidable, efforts have been made to give them a form which minimises the political dangers involved. In conformity with capitalist opinion, planning agencies such as the National Economic Development Council and the ill-fated Department of Economic Affairs were denied the powers they required to function effectively; there has been a persistent emphasis on the voluntary character of relations between capital and the state; and the National Enterprise Board, the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation, and many other government agencies, have been set up as semi-autonomous bodies —which are explicitly not part of a coherent central planning framework. Capital has also sought to prevent detailed intervention into the day to day workings of industry by forcing the government to deal with trade associations and similar bodies, rather than with individual companies. In these and in many other ways, capital has kept the state at arm's length and prevented the establishment of a strong and integrated planning system, whose very existence might have been politically dangerous.

### Freedom of manoeuvre

Quite apart from any political motives, capital has also had strong

The article is based in part on the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture given in November.

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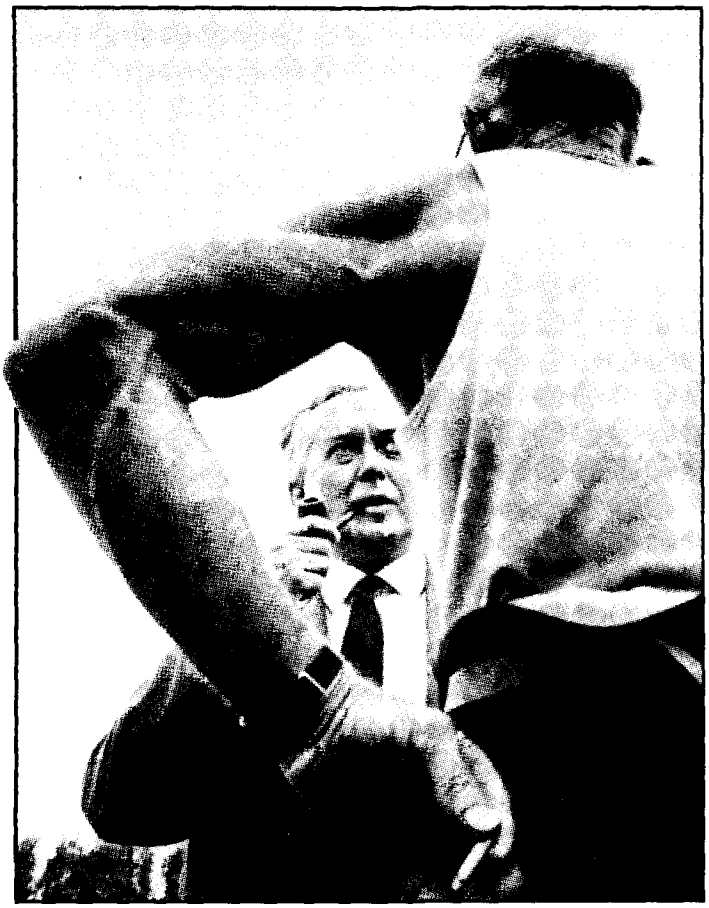

the Labour government lacked both the will and the popular support to implement such a programme against the opposition of capital and its allies at home and abroad

economic reasons for opposing the establishment of an effective central planning system in Britain. Much of this capital has extensive international connections and is worried that detailed state intervention in its affairs will inhibit its global freedom of manoeuvre. This is most obvious in the case of the City of London whose role as a world banking and commercial centre requires great flexibility and involves the perpetual transfer of funds across national boundaries. It is less obvious in the case of industrial firms, but over the past thirty years they, too, have become increasingly international in character. British industry is now dominated by great multinational companies, which own productive facilities in many different countries and organise a complex international division of labour within their own enterprise. Most of these firms are British, some are American and some are Continental; but no matter what their legal nationality, all of them think in international terms and wish to minimise detailed state intervention in their operations. Thus, although there have certainly been conflicts between industry and the City during the postwar period, they have shared a common interest in opposing state policies which might disrupt their international operations. This is even true as far back as the 1950s when, although still mainly national in operation, big British industrial firms were already thinking in international terms and beginning to invest heavily overseas. Given the excellent long term prospects for such investment, these firms were quite unwilling to sacrifice their freedom of action in the interests of national economic growth. Even when British firms later became worried about economic decline and began to support planning in the early sixties, the kind of planning they had in mind was so weak as to be almost useless.

So, there are both economic and political reasons to explain why, throughout the postwar period, capital has opposed the kind of planning and state intervention required to halt Britain's economic decline. By legitimising socialist ideas such measures could have been politically dangerous and undermined the hegemony of capital; and by controlling the international operations of industry and the City these measures could have jeopardised the profits they derived or hoped to derive from such operations. This opposition from capital has been remarkably successful both in preventing the emergence of an effective planning system and in discrediting the whole idea of systematic planning in popular consciousness. It is, perhaps, the main reason why government attempts to halt Britain's economic decline have been so ineffectual.

## BRITAIN'S DECLINE

At this point it will be useful to consider briefly Britain's postwar decline whose various phases illustrate clearly the factors we have just described. When the Labour government took office in 1945 it inherited a crude but effective planning apparatus, which it used to organise the conversion of the economy from war production to peacetime operation. Once this task was complete, the planning apparatus was dismantled and, from then on, no serious attempt was made to organise postwar economic development. Economic surveys were produced outlining future requirements, but these documents were unimpressive and there was no effective system to ensure the various targets were actually met. Because of Treasury hostility and in deference to capitalist opinion, those responsible for planning were denied any real power; the surveys soon degenerated into little more than a public relations exercise in market forecasting and were finally abandoned when the Tories took office in 1951. So ended the first exercise in planning.

The new Tory government explicitly rejected planning and systematic state intervention in the economy, arguing that the allocation of resources and the direction of economic activity should be decided by market forces. At first, this policy was successful, living standards rose and British capital prospered. However, Britain was living in a fool's paradise and success was based on a special combination of factors which could not last. After the Korean War, food and raw material prices fell dramatically and military expenditure was drastically reduced. Up to the mid-fifties this had provided considerable resources with which to increase living standards without harming the profits of British capital. However, it was a once and for all gain, and from then on any further increase in popular living standards had to come from increased productivity or at the expense of profits. Internationally British capital also came under pressure as Britain's formal and informal empire began to crumble at the end of the 1950s. For some years after the Second World War British firms had enjoyed captive markets in the Empire, from which most foreign rivals were excluded; moreover, many of their potentially dangerous rivals in continental Europe and Japan took some years to recover from the effects of the war. Later during the 1950s however, as the empire disintegrated, British firms began to experience increasing competition in formerly captive markets from both the Americans and the newly recovered Continental and Japanese rivals. Imperial decline also created difficulties for the City of London. In the 1950s the prosperity of banking and commercial capital was still based on the use of sterling as an international currency, and this in turn depended on Britain's continued domination of her formal and informal empire (ie, the so-called 'sterling area'). As this domination was undermined, the position of sterling

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**By the later 1970s the British economy was clearly in a bad way and things could not go on as they were. Something had to give.**

became ever more vulnerable, and the long term future of London as a world financial centre became increasingly uncertain.

### Growing difficulties

Thus, on almost all fronts, British capitalism was in difficulties by the end of the 1950s. With the loss of imperial power and increasing competition from abroad, the balance of payments became weaker, sterling crises became endemic, and the prospects for sustained growth seemed gloomy. There was a widespread feeling, especially amongst industrial capitalists, that something had to change, and in 1961 the Federation of British Industries floated the idea of national planning as a way out of the difficulty. Such planning, they hoped, would give big firms the security they needed to undertake long term investment projects and might also persuade the trade unions to accept wage restraint. However, for the reasons described at the beginning of the article (fear of the working class, international connections etc), the kind of planning envisaged by industrial capitalists was extremely weak, and they were never willing to surrender any real power to the authorities. In 1964 Labour won the election and, after denouncing Tory planning as a fraud, set up their own planning agency called the Department of Economic Affairs. Amidst a fanfare of publicity, they unveiled the National Plan in 1965. This looked impressive, but was really little more than a set of pious hopes. In deference to capitalist opinion, the planning authorities were once again denied the powers required to operate effectively, and the plan was already a dead letter by the time it was published. It was formally buried in July 1966 when, in response to a severe sterling crisis, the Labour government abandoned its commitment to growth and full employment, and implemented an emergency package of deflationary measures designed to save the pound against speculative attack.

The implementation of this deflationary package is often portrayed as a victory of the City over industry, but such an argument is misleading. It implies that there existed at the time a viable alternative strategy for growth which industrial capital would have been willing to support. There was certainly some support in 1966 amongst industrial capital for devaluation as an alternative to deflation, but this was by no means universal. Moreover, as later experience demonstrates, devaluation by itself would not have saved either the economy or the pound, and was not in the long run a viable alternative to deflation. The only real alternative was either a *dirigiste* policy involving state control of investment and foreign trade — which industrial capital did not want — or else a full socialist programme involving the wholesale takeover of private firms — which industrial capital wanted even less. Thus, the abandonment of growth and full employment by the Labour government did not occur, as many believe, because the City triumphed over industry. It occurred because no significant section of capital was willing to support the kind of state intervention required to avoid deflation and maintain economic growth, and because the Labour government lacked both the will and the popular support to implement such a programme against the opposition of capital and its allies at home and abroad.

**The approach of the Thatcher government to economic affairs marks a radical break with what has gone before and, contrary to what many people believe, is by no means stupid or ill-considered**

**Table 1 Percentage change in industrial production**
(excluding oil and gas)

| | *1951 to 1966* | *1966 to 1974* | *1974 to 1979* | *1979 to mid 1981** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belgium | 61 | 46 | 5 | −1 |
| France | 127 | 56 | 10 | −8 |
| Italy | 227 | 53 | 10 | 6 |
| Spain | 238 | 123 | 7 | 0 |
| Sweden | 103 | 44 | −2 | −1 |
| West Germany | 185 | 43 | 10 | −1 |
| UK | 57 | 18 | −1 | −14 |

**Source:** NIESR, B Mitchell, European Historical Statistics
* 2nd quarter 1981 compared to average for 1979

**Table 2 Changes in employment in the UK 1966-81 (thousands)**

| | *June 66 to June 74* | *June 74 to June 79* | *June 79 to March 81* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Manufacturing | −713 | −695 | −1000 |
| Non-manufacturing | +250 | +825 | −596 |
| Total | −463 | +130 | −1596 |

### 1966 — a turning point

Labour's burial of the National Plan in July 1966 marks the beginning of a prolonged economic and political crisis which has lasted to this day. During this crisis, Britain's decline has decelerated and all pretence at national planning has been abandoned. As economic difficulties have multiplied, government policy has gone from one desperate experiment to another and, until the advent of the present Thatcher government in 1979, there has been nothing which can really be described as a long term strategy for the economy. The nearest approach to such a strategy was, perhaps, the Barber 'dash for growth' in 1972-73, when the Tories sought to encourage investment through a combination of selective state intervention, financial incentives and an expansionary demand policy. However, this was not a well-articulated programme and it disintegrated as the world economic crisis built up towards the end of 1973.

In 1974 the Tories were replaced by a Labour government which promised to plan the economy and implement a vigorous programme of industrial regeneration. However, because of their radical thrust, these proposals were bitterly opposed by capital and were never implemented in anything like their original form. What finally emerged was a minor set of piecemeal reforms bearing only superficial resemblence to the ambitious industrial strategy contained in the Labour Party's 1973 manifesto and advocated by Left wingers such as Tony Benn. Having abandoned this part of its programme, the Labour government lost all sense of direction and its economic policy became even less coherent than that of its predecessors. Buffetted by inflation and balance of payments crises, it lurched from one emergency to another, pursuing a highly restrictive combination of deflation and wage restraint, and the result was almost complete industrial stagnation.

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## THATCHERISM

Looking back at postwar history up to 1979, Britain's economic decline is evident. Up to 1966 industrial production grew reasonably fast — more slowly than in other countries, but quite fast by historical standards (see Table 1). Over this period manufacturing employment rose somewhat and, apart from a few regional blackspots, there was little unemployment by current standards. From 1966 onwards however, the situation changes. Economic growth slows down and the first signs of 'deindustrialisation' appear as manufacturing employment begins to fall (see Table 2). Even so, there is some growth — by 1974 industrial production is 18% higher than in 1966 — and economic decline is relative rather than absolute. After 1974, however, even this modest expansion comes to a standstill. Unlike other capitalist countries, Britain fails to recover from the world slump in 1974, and over the next five years output and productivity stagnate. The contrast with other countries is most striking in the case of productivitry. Over the period 1974-79 output per person hour in manufacturing rose by 5% in Britain, as compared to anything between 14 and 29% elsewhere (see Table 3).

By the later 1970s the British economy was clearly in a bad way and things could not go on as they were. Something had to give. The Labour government tried to save the situation by turning on the working class. Under the guise of the social contract it administered a real wage reduction of around 8% in 1976-77. This was bitterly resented by workers and was followed by a wages explosion as they sought to recoup their losses, and finally in 1979 the Labour Government fell amongst a welter of recrimination. There was a large swing to the right, particularly amongst skilled manual workers, and a new Tory government was elected on a platform of extreme economic liberalism. Under such slogans as 'roll back the frontiers of the state' and 'set the people free', the Tories preached a virulent free market ideology and began a frontal assault on the institutions and practices which had grown up in postwar Britain. The approach of the Thatcher government to economic affairs marks a radical break with what has gone before and, contrary to what many people believe, is by no means stupid or ill-considered. Politically, its driving force is the widespread hostility amongst the petty bourgeoisie and the middle class towards trade unions and the welfare state, and for this reason its rhetoric is often highly demagogic in character. But beneath this demagogy the Thatcherites have a fairly coherent idea of what is wrong with British capitalism and how it can be put right. This theory has extremely unpleasant consequences for the working class and it may be completely wrong, but it is the coherent outcome of many years of intense effort by right wing thinkers. Its implementation by the Tories represents a determined attempt to come to grips with a problem which governments have evaded for decades.

**Table 3: Output per person-hour in manufacturing**
(percentage change)

| | *1974 to 1979* | *1979 to mid 1981* |
|---|---|---|
| USA | +15 | +4 |
| Canada | +14 | +1 |
| Japan | +29 | +7 |
| France | +25 | +2 |
| W Germany | +23 | +2 |
| Italy | +15 | 0 |
| UK | +5 | +3 |

**Source:** NIESR

### The Thatcherite strategy

Let us consider its theory for a moment. The Thatcherites share with the Left the view that something is deeply wrong with the British economy and that fundamental changes are needed. However, they have diametrically opposite views about what should be done. Most of the Left call for a radical programme of economic and social reforms, including both a new and strongly interventionist role for the state and new forms of democratic control over society and the economy. This, they argue, would strengthen the working class at all levels of society, weaken the power of international capital over the economy, and unleash the creative energies of the British people, so allowing them to tackle Britain's problems in a constructive fashion.

The Thatcherites reject all aspects of this programme. They are opposed to any extension of working class power and to any new limits on the rights of capital, and they reject the usual Left demand for import controls and a strongly interventionist industrial strategy. Although it is often expressed in economic terms, their primary motive for opposing such measures is really political, for these are seen as one more step on the road to socialism or, as their mentor Hayek would put it, on the road to 'serfdom'. Having rejected measures of this kind and yet still believing that something radical is required, the Thatcherites are driven to their present position. They really have nowhere else to go. If a major shake-up is needed and if, for political reasons, a major state programme of industrial modernisation is ruled out, the only possible course left is to use competition and market forces to break up the existing structure in the hope that something new and more dynamic will eventually take its place. This course of action involves a number of specific measures.

For a start, an intense economic crisis is required so as to promote competition between both firms and workers. This, it is claimed, will drive some inefficient firms out of business altogether and compel others to change their methods of work. At the same time unemployment and the threat of redundancy is supposed to discipline workers, forcing them to accept lower wages and co-operate more fully with their employers. To make these economic pressures more effective, firms in trouble because of the crisis must be denied financial support, and allowed to go under if they cannot adapt and survive on their own. Propping them up it is claimed will only prolong the agony and delay the profound changes which are required. On the workers' side, competition must be made more effective by legal measures to reduce the ability of trade unions to defend their members, and by cutting back the social welfare services so individual workers are forced to make private provision for themselves and their dependents. The aim of such measures is to atomise the working class and to strip workers of their collective protection, thereby making them more vulnerable to economic pres-

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sure and less able to resist their employers.

This is clearly an ambitious programme. Its aim is to transform the character of both capital and labour and to lay the basis for a particular form of capitalist recovery in Britain. With a docile labour force and low wages, Britain would supposedly become an attractive location for multinational firms, and those national firms still in existence after the holocaust would be better able to withstand foreign competition.

> there is little sign that the Tory strategy has yet achieved its long term aim of dynamising British capitalism and atomising the working class

**Thatcherism in practice**

So much for the theory behind Thatcherism. How far have its hopes been fulfilled in practice? This is not an easy question to answer because most of the long term effects of the Thatcherite strategy are as yet difficult to observe and will only become visible if and when there is an economic recovery at some time in the future. However, the omens are not good for the strategy's supporters and the promised results seem very slow to materialise. There have been certain spectacular gains in productivity in, for example, steel and cars, and there is some anecdeotal evidence to suggest that work practices are being modified throughout the economy as employers take the present opportunity to reassert mangerial prerogatives and to shed labour. But the long term potential for such changes is limited and the increases in productivity which are now occurring may simply be a once and for all gain as existing production is rationalised. There is, so far, no sign that industry has been infused with the dynamism which the Thatcherite strategy is supposed to generate. Moreover, although militancy is at a low ebb at the moment, the Tories have still not crushed the unions decisively and, as the 'tea break' strike at BL Longbridge shows, workers are by no means defeated. Thus, there is little sign that the Tory strategy has yet achieved its long term aim of dynamising British capitalism and atomising the working class.

If the long term consequences of Thatcherism are uncertain, its immediate impact is only too obvious. There has been a slump unprecedented in the whole of British history. In just one year, between December 1979 and December 1980 manufacturing output fell by 15%. This compares with a fall of 5.5% in the worst year of the Great Depression between 1878 and 1879 and a fall of 6.9% in the interwar depression between 1930 and 1931. No other advanced capitalist country has experienced a fall in recent years remotely comparable to that in Britain (see Table 1). The nearest is France, where the Prime Minister Raymond Barre pursued a somewhat milder version of Thatcherism until he was thrown out after the recent elections. And even in France the fall in output was only half that in Britain.

The slump has led to a spectacular fall in employment. Almost as many manufacturing jobs have been lost in the past two years as in the entire 13 years of de-industrialisation between 1966 and 1979 put together. Moreover, in the past, losses in manufacturing have been offset by the new jobs created in the service sector, especially in the public services. Indeed, under Labour, the total number of people employed in Britain actually rose between 1974 and 1979, despite a loss of 700,000 manufacturing jobs. Under the Tories, however, the service sector has been shedding labour under the impact of the slump and the cuts in public expenditure. As a result, total employment has fallen dramatically. This is reflected in the unemployment statistics which, even when doctored by the government, indicate that nearly three million people are now without jobs. In just two years unemployment in Britain has doubled to reach nearly 12% of the labour force. No other advanced capitalist country has experienced anything like this, and although unemployment has increased almost everywhere, Thatcherism has made things much worse in Britain (see Fig 1).

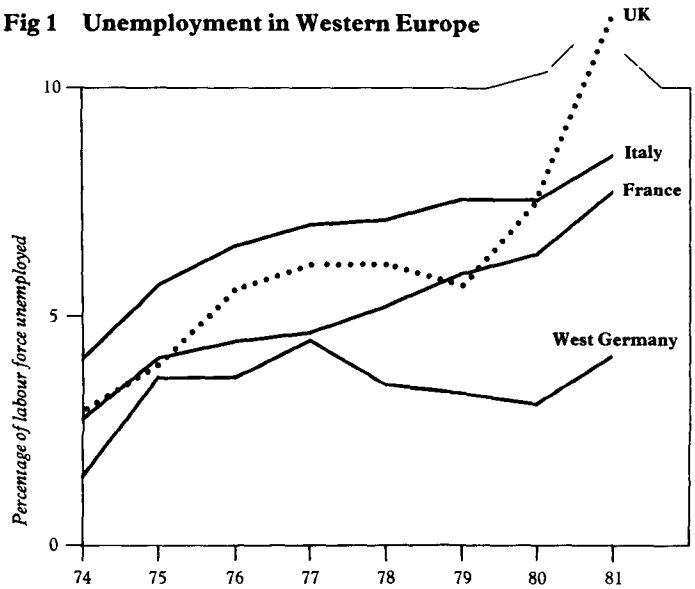
A slump of the magnitude we are now witnessing is bound to hurt all but the most fortunate of capitalist firms and it is therefore no surprise to see that profits have fallen dramatically. Excluding North Sea oil operations, the real after-tax profit rate of industrial and commercial companies has fallen from around 6% under the last Labour government to around 2% today. Since this is an average figure, it means that even many large firms are now in trouble and must rationalise if they are to survive. This is, of course, exactly the logic of Thatcherism, which seeks to force change upon industrial firms by threatening them with bankruptcy.

**SDP/LIBERAL ALLIANCE**

With its harsh free market doctrines, Thatcherism explicitly rejects the consensus approach followed by all preceding postwar governments, both Tory and Labour alike. This consensus approach expressed in political form an 'historic compromise' between capital and the organised working class. Under the terms of this compromise, capital accepted the basic reforms embodied in the welfare state and agreed to provide both rising living standards and full employment, whilst the organised working class confined its demands within narrow economic and political limits, neither seeking too great a share of the national income nor challenging the basic rights of capital.

However, by its very nature, such a compromise assumes that capital is willing and able to keep its side of the bargain, and when this is no longer the case the result is bound to be social conflict and the eventual breakdown of consensus politics. And this is just what occurred in Britain during the 1960s and 70s. For reasons described above, capital prevented the kind of planning and state intervention required to modernise the British economy in a rational and humane way. Government policy towards industry was therefore weak and vacillating, economic difficulties multiplied, and it became increasingly difficult to provide the rising living standards and full employment upon which the compromise between capital and the working class was based. As a result, this compromise broke down and ever

**Fig 1 Unemployment in Western Europe**

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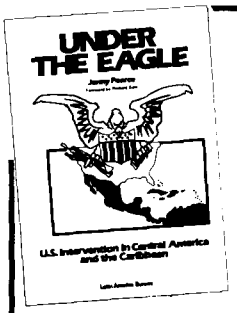


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since there has been endemic industrial conflict over the past fifteen years as workers have sought to increase, or even maintain, their standard of living in the face of hostile employers. And, at a politicl level, the forms and practices expressing the compromise between capital and the working class have now almost disintegrated.

**Disintegration of the consensus**

The process of disintegration is rather complex and cannot be described in detail, but its main outlines are as follows. Within the two main political parties — Tory and Labour — there have emerged powerful radical currents which reject the consensus approach as a failure and seek a fundamental shift in the balance of power in society. Amongst the Tories this can be seen in the virulent right wing backlash which ousted Edward Heath from leadership of the Tory Party in 1974. And in the Labour Party, it can be seen in the growth of a strong left wing around Tony Benn, whose increasing influence was instrumental in causing certain elements of the Party to break away and form a new centre grouping, the SDP.

However, this radicalisation within the Tory and Labour Parties has not been matched by a corresponding degree of radicalisation in society at large. Some sections of the population have certainly moved to the right and, to a lesser extent, the left, but many others have simply become confused and have no idea where to place their allegiance, and as a result their voting behaviour has become increasingly volatile. In 1974 there was a big swing from the Tories to the Liberals which, because of the peculiarities of the voting system, put Labour into office. In 1979 there was a big swing away from both the Liberals and Labour towards the Tories. And now, after just two years of the present Thatcher government, there is a big swing away from both Labour and the Tories towards the new SDP/Liberal Alliance.

Thus, as economic problems have multiplied and the compromise between capital and the organised working class has broken down, there has been a radicalisation within the Tory and Labour Parties. But this has not been matched by a corresponding radicalisation in the society at large, and there has emerged a vast and unstable mass of confused voters who are not really committed to any party. It is to these people that the new SDP/Liberal Party appeals. The aim of this alliance is to re-establish consensus politics, not in the old alternating form of moderate Tory and Labour governments — which is no longer possible — but in the form of a national government based on the SDP/Liberal Alliance and supported by sympathetic MPs from all parties. Such a government, it is claimed, would unite all people of goodwill, eliminate the extremism which is supposedly the cause of all our present ills, and allow the British people to work together in a spirit of cooperation. This message is undoubtedly very popular, and it is quite possible that a national government will be formed after the next election.

**Would it succeed?**

What would be the fate of such a national government? Would it re-establish a stable consensus in Britain, as its supporters claim, or would it fail, just as previous Tory and Labour governments have done, and collapse amidst the usual recriminations? There are obviously many opposing views and sources of potential conflict within the Alliance, on such matters as nuclear disarmament for example, but the fate of a future national government would hinge mainly on its economic performance. If such a government could achieve anything like full employment, and provide security and prosperity for the British people, it would have a secure future and could survive indefinitely. But if it failed to achieve these objectives, a national government would probably collapse and the SDP/Liberal Alliance would go down with it.

To assess the likely economic performance of such a government requires information: both about its economic programme and about the conditions under which this programme would be implemented. On neither point can we be very sure. The programme of the Alliance is still not very clear, and so far it seems to comprise little more than a limited package of measures, consisting of a mild reflation, a certain amount of public investment, some minor social and economic reforms, together with an incomes policy and a small devaluation of the pound. This modest programme is merely a half-speed version of the Barber 'dash for growth' of 1972-73, and its chances of success are slim under the conditions likely to face a future national government.

If such a government comes to power, the economy will almost certainly be in a very weak condition for, although Thatcher's policies have been successful in some areas, they have merely wrecked others and they are most unlikely to revitalise British industry within the next couple of years. And on the international front, conditions would be equally gloomy, for the world economy is now facing a prolonged period of stagnation, and export markets will remain depressed for some years to come. Given the combination of a weak economy at home and depressed export markets abroad, the reflationary package proposed by the Alliance would have only a marginal impact on the economy. Indeed, even its academic advocates admit that it would create only ½ million jobs which, given the rate at which jobs are disappearing under the Tories, would mean that unemployment would remain above its preent level of 3 million.

Such a combination of economic failure and social conflict would destroy the credibility and electoral support for a national government, and the SDP/Liberal Alliance would almost certainly disintegrate under the strain

**The unstable consequences**

Thus, unless there is an unforeseen recovery in the world economy, any government based on the policies of the SDP/Liberal Alliance would soon find itself in difficulties and would inevitably be drawn into conflict with the trade unions, just as preceding governments have been. Such a combination of economic failure and social conflict would destroy the credibility and electoral support for a national government, and the SDP/Liberal Alliance would almost certainly disintegrate under the strain. The result of such a collapse would, of course, be a highly unstable political situation. There would be millions of people deeply disillusioned not just with individual political parties, but also with the whole system of parliamentary democracy. This would pose a real challenge for the Left. For unless these people could be drawn into a new and effective reforming alliance to replace the old and discredited SDP/Liberal Alliance, many of them could shift radically to the right and provide the mass base for an authoritarian government.

This is, of course, all very speculative. No one can know for certain whether the SDP/Liberal Alliance will be able to form a national government or, if it does so, whether such a government will fail. But even so, there does seem to be a good chance that such a government will be formed, and that it will fail because it is unwilling to take the radical steps needed to solve Britain's economic problems. And if it does fail, the Left will face a very difficult situation in which there are new opportunities, but also great dangers. □

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**For eighteen months Poland has been in a state of deep crisis. And the outcome remains as uncertain as ever. Will we see further progress towards new forms of socialist democracy or a drastic, even catastrophic, retreat to authoritarianism?**

STOP PRESS
The Polish Crisis
see page 5

Monty Johnstone and Andreas Westphal

# The Polish Crisis: is there a way out?

The struggles of the Polish workers in the summer of 1980 ushered in a new and stormy period in their country's history. The *dénouement* of this tense drama cannot yet be foreseen, though the elements of conflict and the principal characters with all their contradictory traits are already clearly established and a number of possible scenarios suggest themselves.

August 1980 brought to the surface a long-smouldering structural crisis, in which political and economic elements are inextricably linked. The absence of democratic political structures had had disastrous effects on the economy which it will take many years to overcome.

The Gdansk Agreement of August 31, 1980 recognised the establishment of 'new self-governing trade unions' as 'authentic representatives of the working class.'[1] The formation and legal registration of Solidarity, with its 9½ million members — followed by that of Rural Solidarity to represent three million private farmers — represents something qualitatively new and without precedent in any socialist country.

Poland is today experiencing a crisis of hegemony. The Polish United Workers' Party, recognised in the constitution as the 'leading political force in society in the construction of socialism', has committed itself to work for democratic renewal but is unable effectively to lead the people because it does not enjoy their confidence. The decisive forces in Solidarity and the Catholic Church, which do enjoy such confidence, do not aspire to become political parties taking over the leadership of the government from the PUWP. As the economic crisis becomes ever more acute, frustration grows and reckless local actions are undertaken, which both the Church and Solidarity leadership deplore but are unable adequately to control. In such a situation the only hope for Poland would seem to lie in a historical compromise concluded between the PUWP, Solidarity and the Catholic Church to tackle the crisis on the basis of genuine socialist democracy and along lines that can win the active support of the majority of the people.

Translation from German by Francis King

## THE PARTY — RULE WITHOUT HEGEMONY

Unlike in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the initiative for long overdue reforms came from outside the Party. 'It was only the mass protest of the working class', acknowledged the Programme Provisions for the Ninth Extraordinary PUWP Congress in July, 'which sparked off the process of transformation.'[2]

The 1980 strikes had a deep effect on the Party, 46% of whose three million members are workers, over a quarter of them employed in 168 of the largest factories. The debates before and during its recent congress were critical and self-critical, hard-hitting and conducted extremely democratically, refuting those who saw the Party purely as a bureaucratic apparatus incapable of change. A new central committee of 200 members, elected by a free vote, contained only 18 former members, and only four out of fifteen members of the old Political Bureau were re-elected, though changes in the Party apparatus have been much less drastic.

However the high hopes placed in the outcome of the congress have not so far been realised. It has been unable to capture the initiative among the working people, but has appeared confused and divided in face of a situation for which it was totally unprepared. At no stage has it introduced far-reaching and coherent proposals for reforming the old power structure, as the Czechoslovak Communist Party did in its Action Programme of April 1968.

Although the majority of the Party and its leadership supports 'the line of dialogue and agreement' proclaimed by Prime Minister

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Jaruzelski at its congress, there is a conservative minority working against it. Their view has been expressed frankly and forcibly by Albin Siwak, a member of the Party's Political Bureau, who said on September 14: 'I do not believe in the policy of agreement (with Solidarity) and nobody will ever be able to persuade me from thinking so.'[3] This statement, like others of the same type, was widely publicised by the Soviet news agency Tass. Such publicity for dissident members of the Party leadership attacking its democratically adopted policies encourages them to count on support from the USSR and other Warsaw Pact neighbours in their efforts to reverse the process of democratisation and national conciliation. It undermines the unity of the Party at a time of great difficulty.

Constant Soviet pressure and fears of possible military intervention, as in Czechoslovakia in 1968, have clearly inhibited the Polish Party leaders. Attempting to respond to the contradictory pressures from that quarter as from the Polish workers, they have all too often found themselves satisfying neither.

The Party and its congress set the task of winning back the support which it recognised it had lost among the working people and particularly among youth. But three months after the congress, in his last Central Committee report as First Secretary, Kania was forced to acknowledge that 'lack of confidence is paralysing the Party from within, and no one can believe in a party which doesn't believe in itself.' Zofia Grzyb, a sub-forewoman in a leather plant and member of the Party's Political Bureau, told the Central Committee that the Party was 'disintegrating', adding pathetically: 'I am a worker, so I am incapable of proposing solutions.'[4]

Many in Poland feel that the figure of 60% expressing lack of confidence in the Party in a public opinion poll published on 14 June in the Warsaw weekly, *Kulisy*, would today be an underestimation. There is widespread resentment that a professedly democratic party, recognising its unpopularity, should insist on a privileged 'historical' and constitutional right to control the state and the media in the assumed interest of the working class but against its actual wishes. The *nomenklatura* system, whereby appointments to a wide range of posts in the state and society can only be filled by people approved by the Party committees at the corresponding levels, is particularly strongly contested, including by many members of the Party.

Socialist leadership, based on Marxist analysis, was never more needed than in the tense, anarchic and confused situation in Poland today. The kind of leadership required can however only be achieved by a continuous process of discussion and conviction, in which above all communist democratic credentials have to be established among a population whose lived experiences have filled them with distrust and even hostility.

That is not to say that, in Poland's complex national and international situation, the Party is called upon suddenly to abandon all its positions of control. What however seems to be increasingly accepted at different levels in the Party itself is that it should operate in genuinely pluralistic structures, seeking to win the people's support, whilst committing itself at the end of the day to submit to the democratically expressed wishes of society. Such a view was publicly voiced by Central Committee member Walerian Solinski in September in an interview with the Warsaw youth paper *Sztandar Mlodych*, in which he stated that the Party must if necessary be ready to give up power for a time and become an opposition party. This is in keeping with Lenin's insistence in 1918 on the superiority of the Soviet multi-party system established by the October Revolution on the grounds that 'if the working people are dissatisfied with their party they can elect other delegates, hand power to another party and change the government without any revolution at all.'[5]

A gradual dismantling of the structures through which the PUWP has exercised its leading role by administrative and coercive means would force it to reorient itself to working to lead the people politically and ideologically in new and more effective ways. Readiness to accept such a perspective with the undoubtedly long, difficult and painstaking work entailed would not only help to win back respect for the Party. It would also open up far better possibilities for its co-operation with Solidarity, which the public opinion poll cited above showed to enjoy the support of 90% of the population.

## SOLIDARITY'S DIFFERENT ROLES

With the development of Solidarity, the PUWP can now no longer exercise power at all levels of society in the way it did before. Every decision on Poland's social development has to involve Solidarity. How should its role in society be seen? On the one hand, the Party reproaches Solidarity for not being purely a trade union, for improperly assuming political functions. On the other hand, it is reproached for narrowly pursuing sectional economic interests in opposition to the wider social interest. Yet to work out a programme in the national interest entails Solidarity's involvement in politics. This contradiction has led it to call itself in its programme resolution an 'organisation with a dual character: both a trade union and a wider social movement.'[6]

In practice Solidarity has more than two functions. Firstly, it is a trade union which represents the direct economic interests of the members, for whom it has achieved a 28% increase in money wages since August 1980. On June 15, Walesa said: 'Even in Poland in the present situation, it is not up to a trade union to work out programmes — that is the government's job. We can only take up positions on the programmes that they propose.'[7] In relation to unemployment inevitably resulting from rationalisation and reduction of capacity, this means that the government is required to find ways to redeploy the excess labour force without Solidarity involving itself in how this can best be achieved. Generally this would imply that Solidarity was not in business to develop ideas on how to overcome the national crisis, but only to represent sectional interests in negotiations with the government.

Constant Soviet pressure and fears of possible military intervention . . . have clearly inhibited the Polish Party leaders

Secondly, Solidarity is a movement which, in fact, has a socialist function. It has developed the idea of self-management, and wants the means of production, which were previously at the state's disposal, to be brought under genuine social control. This can only be seen as a progressive development of socialist society.

Thirdly, Solidarity is a political movement, which advocates a fundamental change in Poland's political system. 'We will seek to ensure that the Sejm (Parliament) regains its role as the supreme power in the state and that the amended electoral rules, which enable all political parties, social organisations and groups of citizens freely to put forward their candidates, restore the Sejm's universally recognised character of representation.' (Solidarity's Programme Resolu-

[1] *Morning Star*, 5 September 1980
[2] *Programme Provisions of the 9th Extraordinary Concress of the Polish United Workers' Party, Information Bulletin of CC of PUWP* (Warsaw, 1981), p2.
[3] *Morning Star*, 16 September 1981
[4] *Le Monde*, (Paris), 18-19 October 1981
[5] V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London, 1964) Volume 26, p498.
[6] *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 October 1981.
[7] Walesa interview, *Spiegel* (Hamburg), 15 June 1981

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tion, Thesis 22/2)[8]. To that extent, as Solidarity draws up programmes for altering the political system and political perspectives for social reform, it competes with the PUWP for the *de facto* leading role in society. That is certainly not to say that it is in fact assuming the role of a political party, or that it aspires to change into a political party. Walesa's declaration that 'We are not aiming to take over power'[9] was not merely tactical. It expressed the fact that Solidarity, due to the innumerable ideological currents within it (including a million members of the PUWP) would be in no position to form a viable political party which could take over government, without splitting itself in the process. The political role of Solidarity consists in its using its power to bring about a change in the political system, abolishing the monopoly of power enjoyed by the leadership of the PUWP.

Fourthly, Solidarity is a civil rights movement, which stands for the full realisation of rights guaranteed by the Polish constitution and the final act of the Helsinki agreement, which had been gravely violated.

Solidarity necessarily acquires these functions because of its position in society. Thus, to demand that Solidarity limit itself to a non-political role is to ignore the internal dynamics of the situation. The system whereby power is concentrated in one party cannot accommodate the diverse political currents which have developed in Poland and have taken shape more clearly since August 1980. All the time it remains impossible to settle these differences openly within the political framework, Solidarity will assume the role of an outlet for those forces opposed to the Party. This situation clearly demonstrates the need for changes in the political system if the superimposition of these functions onto a trade union is to be ended. Solutions to the crisis in Polish society can only come through compromises between the Party and Solidarity. The question here is, what are the conditions within Solidarity for such a course?

## THE TRENDS WITHIN SOLIDARITY

Solidarity advocates the retention of social ownership of the larger enterprises, and the continuance of Poland's international commitments. It thus has common ground with the PUWP which makes it difficult for its external and internal enemies to campaign against it under the universal banner of defending socialism, and thus justify repressive measures against it. The attempt at the Solidarity congress by Rulewski, chairman of Bydgoszcz region and the best-known exponent of Solidarity's 'radical' wing, to remove the passage from the appendix to Solidarity's statutes which recognises Poland's international commitments was defeated, despite its considerable support.

There are various reactionary forces in and around Solidarity, which, besides wanting to abrogate Poland's international commitments, also have anti-semitic and nationalist tendencies, like, for example, the illegal Confederation for Independent Poland (KPN). However, their influence in Solidarity is limited, and represents no adequate reason for accepting the arguments of conservative forces in the Party and the Soviet Union against collaboration with Solidarity.

The main issue within Solidarity of how far agreement can be reached with the government and the Party can be observed in the arguments in the second part of Solidarity's congress about the compromises on self-management, which the leadership, largely on Walesa's initiative, had worked out with the government. (See, below, the section on economic reform.) Rulewski's comment was: 'Our union should not compromise' but should start 'smashing the country's totalitarian system'.[10] This demagogic statement implies a perspective of strikes and other mass actions to change the political system. Above all, it is the representatives of the 'radical' wing who

photo: 2 May/Report

promote this line. Those who favour compromise comprise, besides Walesa, the majority of members of KOR/KSS.[11] The latter has now declared its dissolution on the grounds that Solidarity has taken over its function of defending civil rights. The Church, although it has in no way developed into a socialist force, advocates a gradual evolution of Polish society on the basis of co-operation between all the forces in society. Thus Walesa can count on all the church-oriented currents in Solidarity.

Much argument arises from the fact that the leadership has to convince the much more radical regional organisations if the results of negotiations with the government are to be accepted. The tendency towards sectionalism, and the pursuit of exclusively regional interests (eg strikes over disagreements with local officials, against the line of the leadership) strengthens the position of the 'radicals' in the national leadership. All the same, the tireless opposition of Walesa and his allies to strikes because of their current exceedingly damaging economic effects is winning much support. The formula adopted in Solidarity's programme resolution, to use strikes 'only as the final form of protest'[12] is an expression of growing awareness of the need to negotiate with the authorities. Although, all in all, it is impossible to hazard a guess as to whether or not this willingness to negotiate will continue, it is significant and encouraging that the elections for the post of chairman gave Walesa 55.2% of the votes, a clear majority over the combined votes of his three 'radical' opponents. The earlier view that Solidarity merely has to react to the government's economic proposals now seems to have been abandoned. The still incomplete appendix to Solidarity's programme resolution, which contains three separate proposals for economic reform, clearly arose from the need to develop its own proposals for reform to put to the government.

## THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Poland's balance of payments situation is becoming increasingly serious, production has fallen alarmingly and a number of enterprises face collapse through lack of energy and materials. The country faces the winter with a precarious food and fuel situation, and interminable queues for short-supply consumer goods of every kind add to the hardship of daily life. The causes of this catastrophic situation do not lie primarily in the strikes that have affected the country since August 1980, but in longstanding undemocratic structures of political power and economic management. The programme provisions for the PUWP congress wrote: 'Many of the profound perturbations were undoubtedly caused by incompetent

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steering of the development processes by economic managements at various levels, especially the top level, who had been arbitrarily selected in violation of democratic principles and criteria of professional ability. The procedure of decision-making was highly erroneous and in some cases culpable. A decisive influence on important state decisions was exerted by various ministries and regional pressure groups often using erroneously prepared scientific studies, and by cliques.'[13]

Gierek's failed economic strategy resulted in a negative growth rate for 1979 now assessed at −2.3%. It had attempted through investments, particularly in Western technology, financed by credits, to bring about such a great increase in productive capacity that, after a few years, by exporting lucrative industrial products to the West, the debts could be paid off. Twenty seven billion dollars in foreign debts were incurred and in 1980 81.8% of exports were absorbed by debt service. The overcentralised structures for the planning and management of industry favoured grossly misplaced investment decisions and hampered the efficient use of the imported equipment and the linking of production to the needs of society. In addition the planned increases in exports coincided in the mid-70s with the deep economic crisis in the capitalist states.

**The development of agriculture**

Wrong political priorities and the absence of structures through which they could be contested and corrected also seriously harmed agriculture. In 1980 the negative rates of gross agricultural output, which had pertained every year since 1975, except for 1977 and 1978, escalated to −10.7%. Officially the PUWP was committed both to the expansion of the socialised sector of agriculture and to helping the private farms achieve greater efficiency. The latter today comprise 75% of all agricultural land, half of which belongs to small peasants with less than eight acres. In practice a stop-go policy was pursued with regard to help to improve individual peasant production, for which no secure long term prospects of development was ever opened up.[14] Preference was given to state farms in the supply of machinery, fertilisers and spare parts. About two-thirds of investment funds, two-thirds of fertilisers and one tractor for fifty acres were granted to the socialised sector, whilst in the private sector there was one for every hundred acres.

> The causes of this catastrophic situation lie in long-standing undemocratic structures of political power and economic mismanagement

Despite these less favourable conditions, productivity in the socialised sector is or lower than in the private one. In the former, lower net yields (value of output minus production costs) are obtained, which is primarily due to a disproportionate increase in capital outlay and overheads (machinery, repair and servicing departments etc) and their inefficient organisation. A further problem is that the state farms do not have proper economic links with the private farms in their region, as their production targets are laid down solely by the central planning authorities. A division of labour needs to be worked out between the private and socialised sectors, in which Rural Solidarity's participation is crucial.

A reason for the disruption of the supply of goods from the countryside to the town is to be found in the inability of the peasants to buy agricultural investment goods in the towns. Alongside measures for the development of the socialised sector, there is a need much more consistently to seek effective methods of increasing production in the private sector, which the PUWP now recognises as 'a durable element of our national economy'.[15] This urgently requires the provision of credits for its modernisation and the conversion of part of the investment goods industry to small scale technology that can be used on the private farms, whilst seeking to win conviction in the longer term for the advantages of voluntarily developing and extending forms of co-operation.

**Arguments about economic reform**

Since August 1980 seven different economic reform projects have been submitted. The most important, because politically the most influential, is the second project of the Party-Government Commission for Economic Reform, issued in July, and the various Solidarity drafts. Solidarity's views are decisively influenced by the 'Network' (*Siec*), which links Solidarity committees in the 17 largest factories and which worked out a detailed draft law on self-management.

The Party-Government project envisages getting rid of price subsidies which lead to distortions in the structure of production and have entailed such absurdities as the feeding of bread to cattle and the fixing of a price for steel lower than the energy costs involved in its production. Along with this, excessive purchasing power would be reduced.

A combination of central planning with the utilisation of the market mechanism is envisaged. The economy would be divided into two spheres. The first would comprise the social infrastructure, defence, enterprises working for the fulfilment of important international agreements and some other key industries requiring heavy investment, and would continue to come under the direct control of industrial ministries. The second would embrace all other enterprises, which would carry on their activity without direct instructions from central bodies but with regard to market indicators. These enterprises would finance themselves, ie, themselves raise the funds for their reproduction and expansion, as well as deciding on the borrowing needed for this, the scale and assortment of production, links with other enterprises and the diversification of their activity into other branches of the economy. They should 'satisfy social needs at minimum cost' by striving for 'profit maximisation'.[16]

The project is to be introduced progressively. Within three years from the beginning of 1982 the system of central controls will be replaced step by step by economic autonomy. During this transition period the central allocation of goods in short supply will continue.

Solidarity's reform proposals for economic decentralisation and the introduction of market mechanisms only diverge in degree from those of the Party and government. For example, Solidarity stresses the need for the extension of the private sector, which would involve scrapping the ceiling of twenty employees imposed in this sphere.

There are three major questions to which the Party-Government Commission and Solidarity give different answers:

[8] Solidarnosc Programme Resolution of First National Congress, in BBC, *Summary of World Broadcasts*, Part 2 (Eastern Europe), 30 October 1981.

[9] Interview with Walesa, *Marxism Today*, October 1981, p14.

[10] *Sunday Times*, 4 October 1981.

[11] Formed after the 1976 strikes as Workers' Defence Committee (KOR), it changed its name in 1977 to Committee for Social Self-Defence (KSS). Its members have played an active part in the formation and activity of Solidarity, and have been a special target for Soviet attacks.

[12] *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 October 1981.

[13] *Programme Provisions, op cit*, p3 (Slightly modified translation).

[14] See interview with W. Brus, *Marxism Today*, November 1980, p8.

[15] *Contemporary Poland* (Warsaw), No4, February 1981, p45.

[16] Quoted by D.M. Nuti, The Polish Crisis: Economic Factors and Constraints, in *Socialist Register 1981* (London, 1981), p134. Nuti's extremely well documented essay is essential reading for an understanding of Polish economic developments and debates.

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1 What should be the functions of the proposed employees' councils (self-management organs)? Here Solidarity demands that the employees' council should be the effective management or executive of the enterprise. The director should be appointed by the employees' council and should at all times by subject to recall, whereas the original Party-Government draft law on self-management envisaged the appointment of the director by the state with the right of the employees' council to comment on this. After this draft had been rejected by the Sejm in May, a second draft was prepared by a parliamentary commission and represented a substantial compromise with the views of Solidarity. In the sphere of self-financing enterprises the director of the employees' council should be nominated by the employees' council with the state exercising the right of veto. In the defence and socially most important sector the reverse procedure should apply. A joint commission of the state and the employees' councils should decide which enterprises should belong to which sphere. What is in dispute is not the principle of dividing the economy into two spheres, but the question of which specific enterprises should be allocated to which. Solidarity fears that the introduction of self-management and self-financing may be confined to the smaller firms.

After Solidarity's national presidium had approved this new draft, it was approved by the Sejm at the end of September despite strong reservations from the PUWP leadership, and came into force on 1 October. In the second part of the Solidarity congress there was a sharp conflict, in which the Solidarity leadership, and particularly Walesa, were attacked for having betrayed genuine self-management, though the congress did not actually repudiate the compromise reached.

2 Who is to be the owner of the self-managed enterprises? Whereas the Party and government unequivocally regards the state as the owner, with the self-management organs only deriving their authority from it, the point is very unclearly defined by Solidarity: 'The employees enjoy exclusive rights of disposition over the property of the enterprise.'[17] In the Solidarity draft law there is no passage where a limitation of these rights of disposition by overall economic objectives is proposed. It has thereby lent itself to the interpretation that it is favourable to group ownership.

Solidarity leaders argue that their recognition of the need for social ownership of the larger enterprises within the framework of a central state plan refutes such a charge by the PUWP leadership with its imputation of 'anarcho-syndicalist tendencies'. However in the last resort great importance will attach to the behaviour of the employees' councils and the question of how far enterprises exhibit egotistical tendencies and in practice deny the competence of the social planning authorities.

3 What should be the role of the central planning authorities in the economic process and how should they be constituted? There is

Critica marxista
Sommario n5, 1981
Problemi e aspetti del cattolicesimo conciliare e post-conciliare
Giuseppe Chiarante, Da Pio XII a Giovanni Paolo II
Giuseppe Alberigo, I mutamenti nella struttura della Chiesa
Carlo Cardia, La Nuova antropologia come cultura fondante della politica di Wojtyla
Antonio Di Meo, La Chiesa di fronte alla scienza contemporanea
Lucio Lombardo Radice, Cristianesimo e liberazione. Il caso dell'America latina
Il Concilio e la realtà italiana
Giovanni Tassani, La Permanenza del "cattolicesimo politico" e il tema dell'inspirazione cristiana
Marco Politi, Chiesa e Stato. Nuovi termini di confronto
Silvana Nitti, I protestanti italiani e il Concilio vaticano II
Alcuni temi di discussione
Salvatore Veca, Che cosa vuol dire "dignità" della persona
Giovanni Bianchi, Ripresa di religiosità o rilancio dell'ideologia religiosa?
Vittorio De Matteis, L'attenzione verso il soggetto sociale e individuale
Alceste Santini, L'insegnamento sociale della Chiesa. Note sulla "Laborem exercens"


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agreement that they should be responsible for (a) laying down the long term perspectives of development of the economy and ascertaining divergences of the actual process from these aims; (b) undertaking measures to correct these divergences, especially those arising from undesirable results of the market mechanism.

What are contested are above all the extent and form of these responsibilities. How far should the planning organs only have powers to react defensively to market development by correcting distortions, for instance by redeployment measures to absorb unemployment unavoidably arising from rationalisation? Or how far should they be empowered to determine developments positively, for instance by fixing the proportions between branches of the economy and giving priority to certain products particularly important for society? The answers to these questions determine the choice and mode of application of the instruments at the disposal of the planning authorities (credit system, subsidies, differential taxation, etc).

The essential difference lies however in the proposed composition of the central planning body. The Party-Government Commission wants to establish a council, alongside the government and the economic ministries, consisting of the representatives of the three parties of the National Unity Front (see below), the Church and other social organisations, as well as all three trade union groupings (Solidarity, 'branch' unions and autonomous unions). This council would have the right to be consulted and to make proposals on all decisive economic questions, but would have no right of decision.

The Solidarity programme resolution states: 'We think it desirable to examine the need for setting up a self-government body (a self-government chamber or a social-economic chamber) at the level of the highest authorities of the state. The task of such a body would be to supervise the implementation of the economic reform programme, economic policy and similar bodies at lower levels.'[18] Along with this, Solidarity has been proposing the immediate setting up of a 'Social Council for the National Economy' which would comprise representatives of Solidarity, the PUWP and the other parties, along with the Church and other public organisations. The Council was to be independent of the government and be able to control and veto its economic policy. On November 20, however, Solidarity withdrew this latter demand which was seen as an obstacle to agreement with the government.

> The root of the trouble lies not in the character of individuals but in the nature of the power structures inherited from the Stalin period

A crucial question is whether the PUWP will be prepared to pass over its ultimate control of economic planning to bodies more broadly representative of Polish society. Without this, decisions will not be seen as socially binding by the majority of the population and will not be successfully implemented. Solidarity and the majority of self-management bodies cannot be expected to take over joint responsibility unless they are given equal rights and status in the central planning body.

## THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

The upheavals of 1980, like those of 1956 and 1970, represented the crisis of a certain model of socialism. On each occasion working class discontent, denied adequate channels of expression, had built up and finally burst out in explosions. They brought about changes in the Party leadership, important concessions and a denunciation of bureaucracy and of the autocratic practices of the previous Party secretary. Yet on each occasion, after a certain period, the pendulum swung back again to the same concentration of power.

The root of the trouble lies not in the character of individuals but in the nature of the power structures inherited from the Stalin period, within which successive Party leaders operated and enjoyed the corrupting fruits of uncontested power. What has been involved in Poland, as in other socialist countries, has been the subordination of all social and political organisations to an unchallengeable and irremovable governing Communist Party. The latter has, by an extension of the same process, been effectively subordinated to the Political Bureau and sometimes, within this, to the First Secretary and a small group around him.

The negative effects of this system in Poland reflected themselves in arbitrariness and growing corruption not only in the political sphere but equally in the economy subordinated to it. Lack of control from below not only deprived the working people of the democratic rights with which socialism promises to provide them in full measure. It also made for economic inefficiency and disregard for economic reality in general and the subordination of consumer interests and social welfare to capital accumulation. It deprived both the political system and the economy of the feedback mechanisms essential for preventing the accumulation of abuses, errors and the corruption that became so rife at all levels.

The Catholic Church, embracing 80% of the population, has in recent years represented an increasingly strong element of pluralism in Poland, although it has been anxious not to play any directly political role. The establishment and legal registration of the 9½ million-strong Solidarity has however gone far beyond this in its effects on the country's effective power structure. It represents an exceptionally powerful pluralistic phenomenon unique in the socialist countries.

Whilst repudiating allegations of wishing to take power, Solidarity is most certainly an extremely strong pressure group acting on the existing organs of power at all levels and, in practice, introducing elements of dual power into the Polish political system.

While Solidarity's programme resolution speaks of examining the need for setting up a second self-government or social-economic chamber alongside Poland's present single-chamber parliament (the Sejm) to supervise economic policy, 'radical' elements in Solidarity demand such a second chamber, which would be controlled by Solidarity, as a political counterweight or opposition to the PUWP-controlled Sejm. Seen in such a context, it could at best be a recipe for constitutional confusion and deadlock, and at worst a prescription for escalating political confrontation.

Meanwhile the Sejm, which for so long played the role of a rubber stamp to the PUWP and the government, has been exercising more and more legislative initiative, as did the Czechoslovak parliament during the Prague Spring. On more than one occasion the government and the PUWP have been forced to back down and modify their proposals in face of opposition from both backbench Communist members and from the non-Communist parliamentary groups. In October this secured both the retention of concessions made to Solidarity on the self-management bill and the withdrawal — at least for the immediate period ahead — of a proposal for a temporary ban on strikes.

### Parties and elections

Poland has always been, at least nominally, a multi-party state. Two non-Communist parties exist alongside the PUWP, officially

[17] Solidarity's Draft Law on Self-Management Enterprises, in *Forum* (Vienna), September/October 1981, p46.

[18] Solidarity Programme Resolution of First National Congress, in BBC *Summary of World Broadcasts*, Part 2 (Eastern Europe), 30 October 1981.

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acknowledging its leadership, which has since 1976 been enshrined in the Constitution. The Sejm, elected in March 1980, comprises 258 PUWP members, 113 from the United Peasant Party, 38 from the Democratic Party and 48 non-party members including three small Catholic groups. The non-Communist groups are now playing an increasingly autonomous role, helping to enrich the hitherto normally dreary and predictable Sejm debates. Outside Parliament the non-Communist parties have more and more been taking independent stands on political issues.

Up till now elections have always been held for both parliamentary and local elections on a single list of the National Unity Front, led by the PUWP and embracing all the above-mentioned parties and groups. There is today widespread agreement not only in Solidarity but among all except the conservative minority in the PUWP on the desirability of changing this throughly discredited electoral system. Thus, on 8 October, Hieronim Kubiak, Political Bureau member and Secretary of the Central Committee of the PUWP, said: 'The elaboration of a new pluralist formula for the National Unity Front, of a new method of election and of a reorganisation of the legislative system in the spirit of self-management and the expansion of civil liberties is an important task. Under no circumstances can there be any question of restoring the pre-August 1980 order.'[19] However specific proposals seem to have been put off till nearer March 1984 when the next parliamentary elections are due. It should not prove impossible for Solidarity and the PUWP to negotiate an agreement before then on a new democratic electoral system, which will give the electors a possibility of political choice.

For some time there have been moves in some circles to form new political parties. The idea of a 'Polish Labour Party' (PPS), launched by Jerzy Milewski, a Solidarity expert in Gdansk, has support among some section of Solidarity, whose congress however declined to sponsor it. In Warsaw, Jacek Kuron, a former leader of KOR-KSS, has been involved in forming a 'Club of the self-governing Republic', which has been the subject of police investigations. The attitude of the PUWP leadership to all such attempts is at present very hostile. How much popular support such projects get will depend to no small extent on how far the Peasant and Democratic Parties develop as autonomous organisations and are seen as giving expression to the views of the most important sections of critical non-communist opinion. Should the demand for a 'Labour Party' obtain popular support, it would seem better to allow it to exist freely and legally and to confront its ideas and criticisms in open political debate. An extreme right wing nationalist party like the Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN) might however require a different approach.

One of the most important points in the Gdansk Agreement stipulates: 'The activity of the radio and TV and of the press and publications should serve for the expression of a diversity of ideas, views and opinions. It should be subject to public control.'[20] Very considerable progress has been made since then in that direction. However the insistence of the PUWP on its 'right' to control the media provokes continuous clashes and resentment, as does the persistent refusal to allow Solidarity to publish a daily paper on the spurious grounds of paper shortage, whilst organisations with much less support are allotted paper for theirs. The PUWP's break with the old authoritarian power structures would appear that much more decisive if it were to show itself less reluctant to extend to other popular forces the same democratic rights as Communists everywhere demand for themselves.

## TOWARDS A HISTORIC COMPROMISE?

On the evening of November 4 Lech Walesa, Archbishop Glemp, the Catholic Primate of Poland, and General Jaruzelski met to discuss the formation of a Front of National Accord. Though at best only the first step in a long process, it could become the symbol of the desire of the three great social forces in Poland to lay a basis for working together for overcoming the crisis and democratising Polish society. This would be the perspective of a genuinely historic compromise.

This scenario would involve Solidarity giving up organising its activities in the expectation of a sharpening of conflict with the government. Instead it would make proposals for social reform which would certainly compete with those of the PUWP. Such competition would however be seen as a necessary part of the working out of a compromise. The Catholic Church, as a conserva-

tive force in many social questions, would co-operate in the development of the socialist system. The PUWP would renounce any attempt to enforce its claim to exercise a leading role by administrative means and constitutionally prescribed privileges. Instead it would struggle on different social and political levels to convince the population of its ideas and be prepared for the period ahead to give up claims to exclusive positions of political power.

One can assume that such a historic compromise would have to include agreement at least on the following planes:—

The attainment of a compromise on self-management would have to proceed from the interests of the majority of society, which requires both the renunciation of economic sectionalism as of PUWP domination.

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A social control over the media would have to be established, putting an end to their use as an instrument of ideological domination by the PUWP and guaranteeing access to all forces associated with the historic compromise.

Possibilities would have to be created for giving institutional expression to the increasing pluralism that has developed in Polish society. This would entail candidates in local and national elections no longer being only permitted to stand on a single list put forward by the PUWP-controlled National Unity Front. This would not necessarily involve the formation of new parties, but would allow for regional initiatives and would enable Catholic groups and the already existing parties to contest separately if they wished to.

However a second scenario is also possible. Such a historic compromise does not come about. Inside Solidarity those trends which are really committed to seeking such a compromise do not succeed in carrying the day. The PUWP, under pressure from Moscow, shows itself unwilling to give up sufficient of its prerogatives to be able to reach an agreement acceptable to Solidarity. The present political and economic tension becomes even more acute. In such a situation those favouring a return to the old set-up force the PUWP to change its strategy. The inclusive moves towards co-operation with Solidarity are broken off in favour of an authoritarian approach to overcoming the crisis. The PUWP on its own takes charge of the economic reform, and prevents any further discussion on a pluralistic reform of the political system. Such a strategy could certainly rely on support from a section of the population, which has grown tired after nearly eighteen months of instability and disorder and is fed up with the inability of the Party and Solidarity to work together. This section of the population would be ready to abandon any comprehensive democratisation if the PUWP could convince them that it could at least effectively tackle the economic crisis. Such a solution would not be acceptable to the majority of Solidarity, as the attainment of its basic demands like access to the media, pluralistic reform of the electoral system and democratic participation in central economic planning would be blocked. Solidarity would therefore no doubt adopt a strategy of sharpened confrontation which would only leave the PUWP the option of suppressing the opposition movement, for example by mass arrests of strikers or the imprisonment of representatives of the 'radical' wing of Solidarity.

Already today the importance of the army is increasing significantly, and could become crucial in enforcing authoritarian solutions either on behalf of the party or on its own account. For the first time in a socialist country a general holds the post of first secretary of the Party, along with that of prime minister and minister of defence. Alongside Jaruzelski, three other ministers are generals. At the end of October task forces of about 2000 soldiers were given authority to go into the villages and take action to clear the supply lines and ease the shortages of food and other essentials, thereby taking over responsibilities of the local authorities. They were recalled after a month, but troops have now been sent into the towns for the same purpose. Both actions highlight the image of the army as the most — or perhaps only — efficient part of the state apparatus. At the time of writing the PUWP Central Committee has just approved the drafting of a far-reaching Emergency Powers bill giving the government the right to ban strikes and meetings and extend the jurisdiction of military courts. It also appears to have watered down the idea of the Front of National Accord. All this seems to increase the possibility of this second scenario, which could pave the way for a third and even more disastrous one.

The third scenario is a Soviet intervention, possibly on the invitation of a Polish government under pressure from within and without. Whilst Moscow has tolerated more far-reaching developments in Poland than would have been thought possible in July 1980, this does not mean that there are no limits. From the point of view of the Soviet Union four essential factors militate against an intervention. Firstly, unlike in Czechoslovakia, they would have to reckon with massive resistance in Poland. Secondly, the Soviet Union would create additional problems for its own economy by acquiring responsibility for the Polish economy. Thirdly, as a result of the ever more aggressive concepts of the US government there would be the danger because of Poland of an escalation of the two blocks on the military plane, not in central Europe but somewhere in the world. Fourthly, the growing success of the peace movement in Western Europe would be undone at a stroke.

The connection of developments in Poland with the development of the European Left should be underlined. If the historic compromise that we have discussed can be achieved, it would give an enormous boost to the left forces that stand for a pluralistic socialism in Western Europe. An authoritarian 'solution' or a Soviet intervention would give the right wing ideologists ammunition for attacking socialism as being in principle hostile to democracy. However the success of the West European peace movement in preventing the stationing of NATO medium range missiles could increase the tolerance of the Soviet Union towards pluralistic developments in Poland. □

[19] *Le Monde* (Paris), 10 October 1981.
[20] *Morning Star*, 5 September 1980.

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**The recent wages dispute at BL rapidly became one of the most important in recent times. In the end, Edwardes won. But this time it was far from decisive.**

# Interview with Jack Adams

*With Edwardes' threat to close all parts of British Leyland affected by the recent pay dispute, some have seen that strike as the most dramatic since the war. Can you say why, after two years of accepting what was offered, this time the workforce wanted action?*

I think we have gone through a process in British Leyland where at first the workers thought they at least had some choice in the matter. There was the original ballot on Edwardes' so-called survival plan, where workers were consulted, on a completely false premise in my opinion, and were asked if they agreed with the Edwardes plan. It became very apparent to the workers, and our workers are very intelligent people, that over the last two years it was becoming less a question of whether they had any involvement but more, were they prepared to accept management's impositions. The threat that was posed in the last wage dispute was becoming the norm: accept management imposition or face the sack. Workers saw that, in very clear class terms, as an attack on their right to strike, whatever the issue. I think that was the reaction of our members. They were determined to retain the right to have a say in wages, conditions and so on.

*In the past being a Leyland worker has been a dirty word. This time there was wide popular support for the workforce. Why do you think that was?*

I think that the general public has at last begun to realise that Leyland workers are not looking to bludgeon their way to a higher standard of living without deserving it. They are beginning to realise that we are quite low paid and are doing a tremendously hard job, particularly those pressured by production. People are also beginning to realise that you don't hammer out of existence industries like the car industry without it affecting them. I think there is a general realisation of that.

Another aspect is that the British public has begun to realise that the tactics used by Michael Edwardes and the Leyland management represent an anti-working class offensive by the employer. It is an attack on their rights, their wages and all the rest of it, rather than something that affects someone else and doesn't really concern them. I think that this kind of bullying, threatening attitude by Leyland management was at last picked up by the British public in a way that it probably hasn't been in the last twenty or thirty years.

*I was going to mention this authoritarian and dictatorial style. It seemed to me that this was the focal point, if you like, where a lot of working people made contact with the BL workforce.*

It could well have been. One thing that came out very clearly in the

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recent dispute was that people who have worked in British Leyland for the last thirty, and in some cases forty years were, given the company's threat, prepared to lay their jobs on the line for the right to strike. It was clear that this kind of authoritarianism amongst the management was not acceptable to the members. I think it was put better than I ever can by a member in our plant who said: 'I came into this plant without a penny in my pocket 30 years ago, with my head held high and, if I go out the same way, well, so be it, but I am not prepared to be threatened and blackmailed as a way of life.' I think this puts it in a much better way than I can. This kind of threatening attitude with no involvement, no rights, will not be accepted by British workers and I agree that this could be one of the cornerstones on which we could organise a fightback and get general acceptance.

*Yet in the space of two weeks, a 9 to 1 vote for strike action became a 6 to 4 in favour of the so-called peace plan. How did that happen?*

It is quite complex. Over the past two or three years at Longbridge we have faced the brunt of the management's offensive against the trade unions within Leyland. We have had major disputes on parity, on the sacking of the convenor, Derek Robinson, on pay and several other issues where they sacked shop stewards within the plant. So our people are a very experienced workforce and I think the major contribution to the acceptance of the 3.8% was that there was a real doubt in the minds of the membership that the national union leadership were really serious about winning the fight.

OK, I think they accepted that the unions would pay out strike benefit, but it needs a lot more to win a dispute of this magnitude than just plain strike benefit, and I think our membership picked up quite clearly that although they were supported in name, there was no real intention to prosecute the claim successfully. I think that had a very big bearing on the result of that second mass meeting.

**I think that this kind of bullying, threatening attitude by Leyland management was at last picked up by the British public**

There is a big difference between, say, 'we'll support whatever action the membership take', and directly saying 'we are convinced that our members are right and we will fully support the action'. There is a very big difference between the two statements. When the process of negotiations was climaxed with a meeting with ACAS for instance, it was decided by the general secretaries and the trade union negotiating committee to put the company's proposals (which were really a cosmetic exercise) back to the members without any recommendation at all. Now that isn't exactly firm leadership or firm support for the members. And our members are quite skilful; quite experienced in picking up these sort of things, especially in view of the experience of the past two years.

*What you've just described seems to reflect a considerable tension between the official trade union movement and the plant and shop floor organisation.*

I think there is a tension in British Leyland at the moment between the national leadership and the shop stewards movement. There shouldn't be, and we are hoping that whatever disagreements there are between us at local and national level should be eliminated, because we are all clearly faced with the same offensive.

In my opinion, the biggest offensive against the trade unions in the last two years has taken place against union organisation at the point of production. Take my position as a full time convenor, I would regard that as first stage removed from actively being involved with the people on the job, experiencing day by day the difficulties that they have to cope with. When you go to the second stage, local officials, you get a further stage removed. But when you get to the national level, you are quite a way away from the problem. And the kind of identification that you get with local trade union organisations is sometimes lost at national level.

You can afford to be quite philosophical about problems if you are that third or fourth stage removed. A shop steward or a convenor or a plant organisation cannot afford to be. That identification with the members is a real and living thing, something which even the employer recognises. That is why the employer in the past two to three years has tried to move things away from that direct influence at the point of production to national level where they hope to get this kind of second or third stage removed from the actual problem.

This idea has been a major part of the offensive of this government and I think Leyland's has truly reflected the government of the day. Certainly when the Labour Party was in, there were big moves for worker involvement at Leyland. Whether this involvement was real or illusory, nevertheless it was carried out. When you had the election of the Tory government the Leyland management took the anti-union line and acted as a kind of vanguard for British capitalism. I think the intensity of the attack on the trade unions is something that most trade unionists outside British Leyland find hard to imagine. But being involved at the sharp end, within Longbridge, which tends to take the brunt of the attack on the unions, we know very well. It has been a quite vicious, quite strategic attack against unions at their most effective point.

*It is the view of many people that the Labour Party should play a more active role in supporting and assisting the mass struggles of working people. How do you assess the Labour Party's contribution to the British Leyland dispute?*

I think the Labour Party tended to confuse the situation rather than assist. It was a source of great disappointment to me that there were stronger statements in defence of Leyland workers by Tory MPs in marginal seats than from Labour MPs, certainly in the Midlands. One trap they all seemed to fall into was 'ah, so we've got a problem, now how do we resolve it?' rather than 'how do we resolve the problem to bring some kind of satisfaction to the workforce in Leyland?' A lot of sympathy was expressed for Michael Edwardes in the job that he is doing in British Leyland, rather than for the people who have made all the sacrifices there over the past two to three years. And I think that it was this lack of identification with the workers in British Leyland that left a lot to be desired in the Labour Party and Labour MPs.

*There has been a question mark about the significance of the meeting between Michael Foot and Michael Edwardes in the House of Commons on the Thursday prior to the dispute. What is your feeling about that?*

I think the meeting you refer to was anything but helpful at the time. It seemed to me the biggest wish of Michael Foot was that somehow the problem would go away and we would get back to work whether there was any justice achieved for the workers or not. That was the impression I got, and I am certain that it was the impression our workers got. There was no real difference between the attitude of the Thatcher government, the acquiescence of right wing trade union leadership and the position taken up by Michael Foot, which was

The interview was conducted by Pete Sheppard.

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regrettable. Michael Foot has always been a kind of working class hero of mine and I was, to say the least, disappointed with the kind of role that he played in this dispute.

*Now on that Tuesday morning, when the vote to return to work was taken, some people, notably the ultra-left, accused you of being 'too fair and too honest' about the 'peace plan' and the prospects for continuing the strike. What was the thinking behind your presentation?*

My presentation was based on the facts as I saw them. And I will never try to mislead the workforce that I am elected to represent. I think it is absolutely crucial that we are honest with the people who elect us and that we do not try to use them for our own ends. My presentation, in my opinion, was absolutely fair and honest. I told them exactly where we were in the dispute and, after presenting the facts to the members, I strongly urged that they continue the dispute. Now I know of no other way of doing the job that I am elected to do. I don't think it's part of my job either to mislead the members or to get the members out on a false premise. Our members deserve to know the facts, deserve to know the truth and deserve to have our recommendation. That is what I did. The day we start using our members, misleading our members, to get the results that we wish they would take, is the day when we lose their respect and their hearts and minds, which is more important than the other things involved in this dispute. I think in our relationship with our members they should be respected as being able to analyse the situation. It is no good them acting out of some kind of blind loyalty to me, to the trade union or anybody else.

*In assessing the consequences of the return to work, it seems to me that the effect on the broader labour movement was different from the effect it had on the workforce. What is your assessment?*

I would agree with that assessment. I think that the defeat of Leyland workers on wages was a disaster for the labour movement without any doubt. I think it was a well thought out plan by government and employers. Leyland has been in a very weak position for three or four years and trade unions at all levels, national and local, have gone to extraordinary levels to ensure that British Leyland survives. I think that both the Government and employers more widely have taken advantage of this defensive position of the unions. They see British Leyland as some kind of cripple that they can kick and use as a kind of public showpiece for the rest of British industry. It is unfortunate that we were not able to succeed in our claim because employers everywhere will use British Leyland and the defeat of British Leyland against their workers.

It is important to make the point that you cannot build a wall around a firm like British Leyland and expect it to be something different from the rest of British industry. Employers will never build that sort of wall and what has been conceded at British Leyland will be demanded by the employers throughout the length and breadth of the country because there is no distinction from their point of view. 'If concessions of this magnitude can be made to ensure the survival of British Leyland, then what is different with our company?' the argument goes. Likewise you can't build a wall and isolate British Leyland workers from the rest of the trade union movement. To that extent I think it is a tragedy.

Talking from the point of view of Longbridge, there is a difference, in my opinion. We have suffered major defeats and there is no way that I would attempt to hide that fact. However, there has been a tremendous fightback by the workforce, the trade unions and the shop stewards within Longbridge. For the past few months I have


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noticed a greater degree of unity, a greater appreciation of the problems that we face as workers, begin to develop amongst the workforce at Longbridge and a confidence that has not been apparent amongst the workforce for the past three or four years. Although our workers voted narrowly, and it was quite close, to return to work, there is not a feeling of demoralisation amongst the workforce at Longbridge. And I think some proof of that is, that when the company tried to attack conditions immediately on the back of the acceptance of the 3.8%, we were faced with another major reaction by our workers who refused to accept further cuts in their conditions. Indeed, it led to a three week strike and significant concessions

## The day we start using our members to get the results that we wish is the day when we lose their respect

by the company. I am now quite hopeful about the morale and the ability to fight impositions by the company at Longbridge.

*During the dispute I felt there were several very positive features that give a good basis for this processing of rebuilding.*

I think that's true. In this dispute, for the first time ever in my experience, there was general sympathy from the public at large for the BL workers. And when one looks at the kind of press and media attention on BL, I think that was quite extraordinary. One of the more positive aspects of the dispute was the real involvement of wives and families of the strikers who came forward quite spontaneously and offered to help in the running of the strike. We were inundated with offers.

As well as that, there was a large number of people prepared to picket the plant and take an active part in the dispute rather than playing a passive sort of role at home. People were actually volunteering to get involved. So there were very positive aspects to this dispute. I am full of confidence that the workers in British Leyland will be strengthened rather than weakened and demoralised by the dispute.

*My impression is that the idea of a strategic alternative for the British car industry is catching on. How does this strategic perspective relate to the day-to-day struggles like the recent dispute over relaxation time?*

It is very difficult if you switch. You can talk about things that at the minute affect workers at the point of production and you can talk about other things in a more strategic way which at the minute do not affect workers, and it is very difficult. The only way that we can really influence the long term strategy of the industry and the fight to retain our industry, as a viable expanding industry, that could become the powerhouse for the rest of British industry rather than the means of running industry down, is that we must accept and suport members on things that really affect them on a day-to-day basis, as well as on the more general strategic arguments that we put forward within the trade unions. Now, there is without any doubt at all a better realisation that we should have a voice within our industry. There is also a rejection that this industry belongs to somebody else outside of us, the workers, and that we are just a by-product of it. There is a greater realisation that this industry belongs to us as much as anyone else. That is one of the more hopeful signs that I have noticed in the past few months.

*And what about the alliances for such a strategic perspective?*

Well, the main alliance must be with the Labour Party. I mean the Labour Party is the federal party of the working class. Certainly there should be an alliance between the Communist Party and the Labour Party. The Communist Party has always had a clear perspective about the British motor industry and British industry in general. Unfortunately, in my opinion, that has not always been so with the Labour Party. What we need is to develop and strengthen these alliances so that we fight on behalf of our workers regardless of our politics. When I say regardless of our politics, I mean from a socialist point of view that we fight on a political basis as well as on an industrial basis to build the kind of society that our workers deserve.

*In view of the effects on the West Midlands of losing BL, could you say something about the sort of alliances that would have to be and could be forged to build the fight to retain the company?*

Well, the effects of the closure or the loss of British Leyland would be tremendous. We could have a real technological powerhouse created in British Leyland. The reverse would produce the reverse result. It would absolutely decimate the industrial base for the West Midlands. All kinds of alliances could be forged in that kind of situation, and would be forged. There are the alliances with county councils, local councils, small traders who seem to have done particularly badly out of this Tory government. Almost all aspects of society would be affected by the closure of British Leyland, quite apart from the tremendous human sacrifices in terms of unemployment directly. Certainly on the social and industrial well being of the West Midlands, the effects would be dramatic and the alliances could be very broad indeed.

*The latest dispute over relaxation time. How do you see that as fitting into the overall feeling at Longbridge?*

I think that the dispute over relaxation allowance was just a continuation of the struggle at Longbridge. It's about the kind of management we have to face, the kind of conditions that we have to work in. Here we had a group of people who immediately after the wage dispute, were prepared to enter into struggle with the management

## the loss of British Leyland would absolutely decimate the industrial base for the West Midlands

because they thought that it was really important. It was a really important condition that they were struggling for. As usual the media trivialised the dispute into being about a cup of tea. But the facts are that our people on tracks or in conditions where they are tied to the process, have achieved productivity increases almost unheard of —40% in two years. Every minute of the working day is accounted for. They are timed to within one hundredth of a minute and it's a basic human right as they see it to have minimum relaxation periods. And the people from the media who ask me the question and try to trivialise it — I ask them a very simple question. Have you ever timed yourself during the day when you were actually subject to the kind of physical conditions that our workers are? You get a strange reaction when you ask that question. Our people are very hard working, they are in an industry where, if there were not three million unemployed, you'd get very few takers, who would even look to it as an option. It is a very hard industry and they are very hard working. The reason they were in dispute is that they really need it. It is a basic human right in our opinion to have this kind of minimum break from the job. It is absolutely essential. □

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**Paisley's brand of sectarian politics is making the running in the Protestant community. But what factors lie behind its rise?**

Henry Patterson

# Paisley and Protestant Politics

The eruption of Protestant anger in November over the Provisional IRA's killing of the Unionist MP for South Belfast was given its most strident and disturbing expression by Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party. Together with the emergence of the 'Third Force' to supposedly give Protestants the protection that the British Army and the local security forces have failed to provide, and the attempt to link the security issue to the British government's alleged plan to gradually ease Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom, this has contributed to the prevalent media image of Protestant politics in which its essential spirit is materialised in the blustering bulk of Paisley.

However, despite Paisley's present domination of this media, it is important to remember that Paisleyism as a mass force with substantial working class support is a very recent phenomenon. It was not until the Westminster general election in May 1979 that the DUP increased its share of the twelve Northern Ireland seats from one, Paisley's own in North Antrim, to three. Most significant, in two of these victories, North and East Belfast, there were signs of an increase in support for the DUP amongst a previously reluctant Protestant working class. As one Official Unionist commented (the Official Unionists were the dominant force amongst the various loyalist groups that had opposed power-sharing),

> 'In the late sixties it was a commonplace for left wing writers on the growing crisis in Ulster to represent the embryonic Protestant Unionist party of the Rev Ian Paisley as a populist movement destined to capture and articulate the latent resentments of the Protestant working class in Belfast. Yet a political breakthrough in Belfast eluded Paisley's party. In fact such a breakthrough was to come first in rural Ulster. May 3 1979, has radically altered Paisley's catchment area.'[1]

The subsequent Euro-election in which Paisley got just under

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The original unity of the Unionist movement was based on much more than the sectarianism of the Orange Order.

30% of votes cast, capturing half of the Unionist vote and the 1981 local government elections in which the DUP almost overtook the Official Unionists in the number of seats held, has allowed Paisleyism to increasingly set the tone of Unionist politics.[2] How is this development to be explained?

## SECTARIANISM AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

The fundamentalist type of religion at the core of Paisley's world view is not the basis of his electoral success. It is clear that decisions made by some councils under DUP control to close leisure centres on Sundays are unpopular with many Protestants including working class Protestants who voted DUP. In fact narrow sectarianism of this kind has been only one component of the major Protestant political mobilisations from the time of the first Home Rule Bill (1886). Despite the view of both recent television histories of Ireland, the Unionist mobilisation against Home Rule was not predominantly an Orange Order affair.[3] Despite its importance the Order was never a force that could have provided the integrating ideology for Unionism as a mass movement. There were simply too many Protestants who were not only not members of it but also bitterly hostile to it. The original unity of the Unionist movement was based on much more than the sectarianism of the Orange Order.

Ideologically it was based on the representation of the uneven development which was a stark reality in Ireland at the beginning of this century. Unionism was built round the contrast between 'bustling', 'progressive' industrial Ulster and 'backward', 'stagnant' peasant southern Ireland.[4] The political argument was that rule from Dublin would be economically and socially retrogressive and this was of particular importance in integrating the Protestant working class into the Unionist movement. A related factor often ignored in analyses which dwell so much on Protestant sectarianism is the role played in unifying the Protestant community by the sectarian aspects of Irish nationalism then and since. Thus although James Connolly's analyses of Orangeism are often quoted, no mention is made of his references to the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the main mass sectarian exclusivist organisation on the Catholic side in the Home Rule period. But it was Connolly who wrote,

> 'Every shade of political opinion in Ireland . . . agrees that this organisation of Mr Devlin's creation, and of whose work Mr Redmond (the nationalist leader) accepts the fruits, is the greatest curse yet introduced into the political and social life of Ireland.'[5]

### Divergence between north and south

Since the formation of the two states in 1921 the decline of the main staple industries in the north (shipbuilding, heavy engineering and textiles) and the economic development strategies adopted by governments in the south have transformed the comparative situations of both economies. However, it is important to remember that as recently as the mid-fifties there was widespread discussion in the press and Dail (legislature in the Republic of Ireland) about just how long it would be before the 'Irish race' became extinct so great was the rate of emigration from the Republic's crisis stricken economy.[6] For over two decades after 1932 successive Fianna Fail governments in the south had followed a strategy of industrialisation based on protective tariffs and import substitution.[7] In theory at least the industrialisation was to be based on the mobilisation of 'Irish' resources; as far as possible foreign capital was to be kept out. The same period saw a drive to exclude British based unions from the

south. A nationalist offensive within the southern labour movement was to split the trade union movement into two organisations from 1945 to 1959. One of these organisations, the Congress of Irish Unions, was to propagate an intense Catholic and anti-socialist ideology.[8] These were years of an intense Catholic-nationalist offensive against all 'alien' ideas and institutions in every area from the unions to literature and the theatre.

It would not have taken much effort on the part of the Unionist party in this period to persuade Protestant workers that the south was an alien society and one which was engaged in an economic development programme of little relevance to the north and one which was, from the end of the Second World War, no longer capable of even developing the productive forces of the south any longer. The end of the war also saw the north integrated into the British welfare state. This was a process bitterly resisted by some sections of the Protestant bourgeoisie, but supported by a Unionist government who were well aware of the effect the welfare state would have in increasing the differential between working class living standards in the north and south.

[1] *Irish Times* 8 May 1979.

[2] In fact the DUP got more first preference votes, with just over 50% in the local government elections. For the first time it is the largest Unionist group on the Belfast corporation. *Belfast Newsletter* 23 May 1981.

[3] For a critique, see Paul Bew 'Britain's modern Irish question', *Economy and Society* vol 10 No 4 November 1981.

[4] The political implications of uneven development were first systematically dealt with in Peter Gibbon's *The Origins of Ulster Unionism* Manchester 1975.

[5] Quoted in Bew, p485.

[6] This is dealt with in Paul Bew and Henry Patterson *The Reshaping of Modern Ireland 1945-66,* to be published by Gill and MacMillan, Dublin summer 1982.

[7] Founded in 1926, first in power in 1932, Fianna Fail originally combined republicanism with a populist economic and social programme.

[8] E Rumpf and AC Hepburn *Nationalism and Socialism in twentieth century Ireland,* Liverpool 1977, p151.

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### The crucial reality

These points cannot be over-stressed for they signal one crucial reality: the clear divergence of economic and social structures north and south is quite sufficient to account for the existence of two states and the fact that the Protestants and in particular the working class have always been militantly anti-nationalist. The role of sectarianism is not that of, in any sense, *founding* the state, but in influencing the *form* that it took. Similarly in analysing the politics of the Protestant masses in any particular period, sectarianism will undoubtedly be an element. But it will not have a pre-given significance, its importance will be determined by specific circumstances. This means that while the material basis for Protestant sectarianism has existed and still exists in Northern Ireland, it does not in itself have enough weight to determine political developments. Before elaborating this point it is necessary to outline what the material bases for the continued reproduction of sectarianism are.

the clear divergence of economic and social structures north and south is quite sufficient to account for the existence of two states

The usual arguments on the relationship between economic differentials and sectarianism have not got much beyond the impressionistic comments on Belfast by Beatrice Webb made after spending part of her honeymoon there collecting data:

> '. . . hardfisted employers and groups of closely organised skilled craftsmen . . . veracious and cautious in their statements about their own conditions of employment and contemptous and indifferent to the Catholic labourers and women who were earning miserable wages in the shipyards and factories of Belfast.'[9]

This was relatively superficial even at the time for it left out of account the fact that the majority of labourers in the shipyards and factories would have been Protestants. But more fundamentally any attempt to develop a theory of Protestant politics based on arguments like this results in a complete reversal of the relation between sectarianism and the workplace[10]. Sectarianism in the workplace did not and does not reflect the needs of particular groups of Protestant workers to defend their privileges. It did and does reflect an intense distrust and antagonism of *some* Protestant workers to Catholics which has its origin not in the sphere of production but in the state of inter-communal relations. The material basis of sectarianism is in this sense much more a question of *territory* than occupation. Orangeism as a popular movement provided an identity for its supporters through the process of regular and often ritualistic confrontation with Catholics seen as the bearers of alien religious and political principles. Orangeism can feed off any situation which can be represented as a Catholic threat to the existing balance of forces. In this sense the importance of economic differentials is clear, although derivative. The entry of Catholics into a particular workplace or occupational category will be represented in the same way as any change in the balance of forces between the two communities. The wider *political* conditions for the operation of this process are crucial. Thus although throughout the nineteenth century relations between Protestant and Catholic workers would regularly be strained at the time of the annual Orange celebrations every July, the major outbreaks of violence in workplaces came only when there was a general political uncertainty about the future government of Ireland as a whole — 1886, 1912 and 1920.

## POPULISM AND THE NORTHERN IRELAND STATE

It was the ambigious attitude of the Protestant bourgeoisie to these outbursts of popular Protestant violence that contributed to the important tradition of Protestant populism which Paisley embodies so well. For not only were the bourgeoisie in Ulster split in their political attitude to Orangeism, with the important Presbyterian section of the bourgeoisie seeing the Order as a catspaw of the established church and the landlord class. All the bourgeoisie opposed any interference with the prerogatives of capital to hire what labour power it wanted and to organise production in an orderly and continuous way. As long as the Unionists also believed that a substantial section of the British ruling class and public opinion would support them against Home Rule there was also a desire to make the Unionist case seem as reasonable and non-sectarian as possible. For all these reasons the Protestant bourgeoisie had good reasons to want to keep Orangeism in check.

This lukewarmness has at various times given rise to popular movements of protest attacking the 'compromises' and general timidity of the Protestant upper class and demanding a more militant style of leadership whatever the effects on production and British public opinion. This militancy was often associated with attacks on the class nature of the Unionist leadership, accusing it of neglecting the material interests of the Protestant masses. The Independent Orange Order, of which Paisley is a member, was founded at the beginning of this century in part as a protest at the manipulation of the original Orange Order by the bourgeoisie. Its leader was the only Unionist Westminister MP to vote consistently with the Labour Party and in Belfast some of its members played an active role in the local labour movement. By linking class grievances with Orangeism, populism has been at times a severe political embarrassment to the Unionist political leadership. However, just because it was a sectarian tradition, it could be relatively easily assimilated through the adoption of a more strident anti-catholic position by Unionist politicians. It was this assimilation which gave the Northern Ireland state its specifically sectarian cast — the famous 'Protestant Parliament for a Protestant People'.

The state was born in circumstances of intense political instability. By 1920 it was clear that the IRA had broken British rule throughout the south of Ireland. In the north the Unionist political leadership was in a state of acute apprehension over the threat from republicanism at a time when it was becoming clear that the predominant position in the British ruling class was to treat the Unionists as expendable in an attempt to consolidate the more 'moderate' wing of the nationalist movement in power in Dublin. This made the maximum possible degree of Unionist unity necessary and given the lack of trust in Britain's long term commitment to partition, it means an increasing reliance on a repressive apparatus — the RUC and a special constabulary — under local control and 'responsive' to local, Protestant pressures. Right from the beginning therefore security policy and local, Protestant control over it were central to the functioning of the Unionist state.

### Unifying Unionism

Although this reflected a situation of military and political uncertainty it had also the effect of integrating the Unionist bloc. For the threat to the state was not only defined in terms of republicanism. Little more than a year before the outbreak of the 'Troubles' in 1920, the city of Belfast had been brought to a halt by a mass strike of shipbuilding and engineering workers and there is plenty of evidence that the Unionist leadership was almost as worried about the defection of sections of the Protestant working class to socialism as it was about Sinn Fein. The 'constitutional issue' — the supposed threat to the very existence of the state — was therefore crucial not simply in mobilising the population against the IRA but as a means by which the Unionist bourgeoisie waged the class struggle against its own proletariat.[11] Throughout the history of the state the Unionist party would use the threat to the constitution as an ever-present

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reason why Protestant workers should put loyalism before class interests.

The continued existence of the IRA, although for most of the history of the state it was too feeble to be a real threat, and the almost universal acceptance in the political culture of the south that partition should be ended, gave some external and internal basis for the Unionist 'siege mentality'.[12] But it was the functioning of the Unionist state itself which was largely responsible for it. By openly demonstrating its distrust of Catholics by excluding them from all but the most menial types of government employment and by maintaining a form of exceptional legislation — the Special Powers Act — and an often openly partisan judicial and police system, it demonstrated to the Protestant masses just how seriously it took the threat of subversion.

Even Terence O'Neill, the Unionist prime minister popularly associated with reforms and the attempt to 'build bridges' (his phrase) between Protestants and Catholics, was quite prepared in the Stormont elections of 1965 to claim that the Northern Ireland Labour Party was a threat to the state, despite its own quite strident support for the Union. But the most interesting thing about this election was the degree to which O'Neill himself realised that the NILP had to be dealt with in its own terms — by demonstrating that the Unionist party also had a set of progressive economic policies to deal with the crisis of the local staple industries. It is clear that the degree to which traditional appeals on the constitutional issue could be effective depended greatly on the overall political context.

**The crisis of Unionism**

This context was to change dramatically in the mid-sixties. The Unionist state was to reel under the impact of a series of crises. Its incapacity to deal with the major crises of the linen, shipbuilding and aircraft industries at the end of the fifties, had caused substantial working class defections to the NILP To recuperate Unionism's position O'Neill tried to identify it with an ideology of 'planning' and 'modernisation'. One of the effects of this was an attempt to rationalise local government structure. However, it was in just these apparatuses that much that was central to the functioning of Unionism went on: particularly the exclusivism in the area of the allocation of housing and jobs. The result was the emergence of serious divisions in the party. These predated the Civil Rights movement but its emergence forced them to a new level of intensity.

Those Unionist leaders starting with O'Neill who, under British pressure, attempted to reform the state soon came up against the basic problem that it was this very state and its method of operation that had provided the basis for Unionist unity. That this was being done under British pressure made the process even more potentially explosive. For the original form which the state took had been greatly influenced by Unionist distrust of the British government. It was clear, even by 1921, that Ulster would remain in the Union more because of the immense difficulties involved in engineering a united Ireland than from any substantial British interest in maintaining Partition. In 1966 at the start of the present troubles it is estimated that British subsidies to Northern Ireland were £245 per head (at 1975 prices) and this had risen to £480 in 1978[13]. Although Unionists will argue, with justice, that no one makes an issue of the 'subsidisation' of similarly economically disadvantaged areas of Scotland and Wales, there is an increasingly clear recognition that Northern Ireland is not just like any other region in the United Kingdom, at least as far as the British ruling class is concerned. British politicians' reminders of the extent to which the province is dependent on British support, most notoriously in Harold Wilson's use of the term 'spongers' in his television broadcast during the Ulster Workers' Council strike, serve to accentuate the belief that any British government will be eager to extricate itself from such a costly commitment.

Those Unionist leaders who have cooperated in British initiatives since 1968 have therefore laid themselves open to the charge of dividing the Protestant population at a time when it most needed to be united. That the reforms concerned amongst other things just

> By linking class grievances with Orangeism, populism has been at times a severe political embarrassment to the Unionist leadership

those apparatuses — the police and the special constabulary — that had been traditionally defined as essential to the very existence of the state intensified the opposition. The street violence which erupted in August 1969 and in which members of the special constabulary were involved, precipitated the sending in of British troops and created the conditions for the final crisis of the Unionist state.

**DIRECT RULE**

Heath's abolition of Stormont in March 1972 was a direct response to the massive Catholic withdrawal of support from the existing state after internment and Bloody Sunday. There was a belief that the Provisional IRA could only be defeated by isolating them politically from the Catholic masses and it was calculated that for this to occur a major restructuring of the state was necessary. However, it was the effect of Direct Rule on Protestant politics that was to have the most decisive long term effects, and one far removed from the intentions of its planners. Direct Rule had one of its desired effects, which was the break-up of the Unionist monolith. It was hoped that out of a period of intra-Unionist division would emerge the basis for a new

[9] Quoted in Henry Patterson *Class Conflict and Sectarianism*, Blackstaff Press 1980, p29.

[10] The most recent attempt is L O'Dowd, B Rolston and M Tomlinson, *Northern Ireland: From Civil Rights to Civil War* CSE Books, 1980. For a contrasting approach see Bew, Gibbon and Patterson *The State in Northern Ireland*, Manchester 1979.

[11] In the mass expulsions from the shipyards in 1920 many Protestant members of the ILP lost their jobs.

[12] The role of the strident irredentism of Fianna Fail in unifying Protestant politics from De Valera to Haughey should not be underestimated.

[13] Rob Rowthorn, 'Northern Ireland: an economy in crisis', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 1981, 5, p23.

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kind of unity to underly the state — that of the moderate centre, including the Alliance party, the NILP, the SDLP and moderate Unionists freed from the suffocating embrace of the old party.

However, not all the elements which were set free by the strategy were of a moderate disposition. Unionist hegemony had had as one of its most enduring ideological effects amongst the Protestant masses the identification of stability and security with a particular type of political control of repression. At the centre of the problems facing William Whitelaw, the first and most activist Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, was the need to transform the ideological relationship of the Protestant masses to the key questions of security and stability. The Union which had for fifty years been indissociably linked with a real material reality — the form of organisation of the state apparatuses — was now to be guaranteed by the much less substantial reality of bargaining and compromise between 'reasonable men' on both sides.

But some of the compromises which Whitelaw attempted to organise only served to consolidate those forces in Protestant politics opposed to any reforms. Thus it is doubtful if his reputation survived the leaking by the Provisionals that he had had six of their leaders flown to London to meet him secretly in July 1972. This was at a time when the Provisionals were at the height of their campaign of car-bombing the main urban centres of Northern Ireland causing substantial numbers of civilian deaths and mutilations. Similar in effect was the decision, under pressure from the southern government and the SDLP, to make an 'Irish Dimension' a central part of any settlement in the north. This was crucial in undermining support for the Faulkner Unionists (supporting power-sharing with the SDLP) in the period between the Assembly elections in June 1973 and the Westminster election in February 1974 where they were decimated.

**The rise of Paisley**

The effect of British policy in conjunction with the Provisional campaign has been to generate the conditions for a resurgence of Protestant populism. This has been articulated in various forms. The UDA, although clearly having its origins as a unification of vigilante groups in working class districts of Belfast, was very early articulating the traditional populist message that the Protestant masses had been betrayed by the 'fur-coat brigade'. Its politicisation was hastened by the UWC strike where it provided much of the muscle which made it effective. Its leadership was soon to complain that all it had achieved was the replacement of one group of useless politicians by another. Out of these experiences came the adoption of 'Independence' as its solution to the conflict. Whatever its undoubted progressive value in shifting the focus of the leadership's attention from military questions to politics, it has so far clearly failed to attract the support of any substantial section of the Protestant working class. For although the seventies was to see a shrinkage in the size of the core sections of the Protestant working class due to a combination of the general crisis of the UK economy, a weaker regional policy and the deterrent effects of the violence on inward investment[14], the tendency so pronounced in that class to see in the 'link' with Britain the basic guarantee of its economic well-being is still there.

It has been the Paisleyite variety of populism which has made most political progress. The essence of his appeal was epitomised in his telegram to Thatcher after the 1979 Westminster election demanding a meeting to let her know that 'the Protestant people of Ulster have had enough of violence and the Provisional IRA'. The continuation of Provisional violence would not, in itself, have guaranteed Paisley his success. This came as a result of the effects of the abolition of Stormont on the Official Unionists. As possession of the state apparatuses had served the function for traditional Unionism of producing Protestant unity, its loss of control of the state was to produce a profound disorientation. No unitary strategy replaced it. Instead the predominant characteristic of the Official Unionist party has been its equivocal position. While formally committed to pushing the British government for the return of an elected legislature with substantial powers, an important reaction of its leadership has been prepared to accept much less than this. It has been openly split between 'integrationists' and 'devolutionists' and it is this equivocation that has provided the basis for Paisley's contention that traditional Unionism must be recreated with the DUP as its core. DUP strength is therefore the product of its apparent possession of a strategy in comparison to the fumblings of the official Unionists. This extends to the area of economic policy where some at least of the leaders of Official Unionism are declared supporters of monetarism whilst the DUP is publicly adopting a rhetoric of anti-Thatcherism and opposition to the cuts.

**Undermining the DUP**

Are there any limits to the expansion of the DUP's electoral support among Protestants? Will it soon become the obviously predominant party on the loyalist side? These questions must remain open, although the signs that there is some grass roots Official Unionist support for a merger with the DUP does not bode well for future of the party. Internal to Northern Ireland, Paisley's belligerent demagogy still alienates those Protesants who fear that it can only lead to a confrontation with Britain and bring withdrawal that much nearer. But the continuation of the Provisionals' terrorism will at least ensure a substantial place in Protestant politics for the DUP. One change in the external situation which may limit the growth of Paisleyism has been the return of the Coalition government in the Republic. Paisley's surge forwards in the local government elections reflected not only the extreme polarisation brought about by the Hunger Strike, but also the grandiose claims which the then Fianna Fail prime minister, Charles Haughey, was making for the Anglo-Irish talks. These were presented essentially as a means of outflanking Unionist opposition to moves towards unity. As in the past the propagation of a strident nationalism by a southern government only served to consolidate the most irreconcilable elements in Protestant politics.

The effect of British policy in conjunction with the Provisional campaign has been to generate the conditions for a resurgence of Protestant populism.

Similarly the continuation of Direct Rule reflects a fear on the part of successive British governments that a mass basis for the politics of compromise and accommodation does not exist. But this reluctance to devolve power to local politicians simply makes it easier for Paisley to claim that the basic commitment is to settle the question over the heads of the Protestants. If the Unionist monolith is not to be reconstructed around the DUP a clear commitment to devolve government with rigorous safeguards for minorities is essential. This is not in itself a 'solution'. All it does is make a progressive solution more likely by removing the constitutional uncertainty on which the DUP thrives. □

[14] According to Rowthorn's calculations, in 1970 manufacturing employed 32% of the total workforce, in 1980 it was 23%. In contrast was public and private services where the figures are 41% and 54%. The high degree of dependence on the public sector obviously makes the independence option even more unattractive. p11.

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# Channel Five

*Trevor Laird and Norman Beaton in 'Easy Money'*

## BLACK ACTORS

Anton Phillips

To be an actor is difficult and risky; to be a black actor is difficult, risky and demeaning. This sums up the major problems facing black actors in this country.

Week in, week out, in British television drama, a visitor from Mars would never believe that ours was a multi-racial society. Failing that, a really observant visitor from Mars would believe that the few black people here were all whores, villains, unemployed or porters and nurses. Television may think it right to reflect the large number of black people who are unemployed; also, to reflect the large number employed in the health service and transport. We are also told that there is a high proportion of black people in prison. Yet nurses, villains and bus conductors are a small minority of the black people in this country. Blacks are to be found in all walks of life. Yet we could watch television every night and never know. Is that the result of an accident? Is it that all the writers, producers, directors and casting directors never go into the real world? Obviously the answer to both questions is no. Is it then that they deliberately choose to project black people in a limited way? I don't think so. I do think however, that along with the vast majority of white people, a section of them stubbornly refuse to accept that this is a multi-racial society, and will remain so until the end of time. They and their viewers are of one mind, the blacks are menials and temporary — always excepting the one they know or work with.

We are told by these powers in television that they do not practise racism, but they have to cast 'realistically'. The doctrine of realistic casting states that no black artist can be cast in a part in which it is unlikely to find such a person in real life; also that black artists cannot be cast in parts which would make the scripts absurd because of their incongruity. The British have always had the unsurpassed ability to face both ways at once. In my view, realistic casting is the justification for operating a colour bar. Not until the doctrine of 'realistic casting' is killed stone-dead will we see television reflecting the true nature of society. In the meantime we will have black actors and white actors.

Integrated casting is vital for two main reasons. When campaigning the state of British television, as regards the black artist, to American TV, it must be noted that young blacks have no 'media models'. In a society where so many of the black youth are struggling for some kind of identity, and against rejection, is there not a role for television? If we accept that television can and does influence people, then we have to accept that constantly to depict black people in a certain way is, at best, reinforcing established prejudices, and at worst creating limitations. It is quite possible for black children to grow up in deprived areas, poorly educated, and never be exposed to the alternatives available. For them, all is pointless. Everything they are exposed to suggests they can achieve nothing. When they look at television all they see is a world in which they play no part, or a recapitulation of their own hopeless lives.

Rarely are they given an image of black people which suggests that there is an alternative to enforced idleness or a life on London Transport. The black 'media model', who might just spark a ray of hope or admiration in the mind of a youngster, is absent from our screens. This is not to say that if we had worthy media models, the place would suddenly be overrun with black diamond merchants or Texas oil millionaires. Taking sports as a parallel, it is undeniable that the exposure given to black cricketers, footballers and athletes has resulted in an extraordinary increase in black youngsters taking part in these activities. This correlation between exposure and participation is true for blacks and whites. Are we then to believe that what is true for sport is not true for anything else? If youngsters are prepared to emulate their black sporting heroes, we must assume they are prepared to emulate other 'heroes' with which they can identify.

The second reason why we need integrated casting is to get at the very root of the problem. The media is the most effective way of convincing white people that blacks are here to stay. It is easy for people to go home and shut their doors on the world. Television should be opening their minds to the facts of life. They should do this by putting black people in front of them, in their living rooms every night. Television should repeat the message over and over again: 'there is nothing startling about casting a black artist in any part.' Eventually, white people might start to see beyond the stereotyped image.

We all know that television can use its immense power to form opinion, or reinforce attitudes already held. That power can be used in a positive constructive way, not used at all, or used in a negative way. When it is not used or used in a negative way — as it is now — then television is guilty of something or other. Maybe they are guilty of moral cowardice; or guilty of tacit support of racist attitudes; or, maybe just guilty of lack of vision. It could be they are guilty of all three, and more besides. No doubt some people will argue that it is not the job of television to be revolutionary, to go outside the limits they have set themselves and to which their viewers have become accustomed. These are the people who believe that television should hold a mirror up to life, as it were. Among this group you will find your realistic casters. There is another group, much smaller than the first, who believe that television should be stimulating and progressive. At the moment television satisfies neither of those groups. What is called realistic casting is, in fact, stereotyping. Certainly the myriad experiences, occupations and lifestyles of black people are ignored. What we see on our sets becomes a lie because it implies that we are seeing the whole truth. For those who believe that television should be stimulating and progressive, there is nothing but despair. The infusion of black artists, across the board, may not suddenly transform the mediocre into the magnificent. (On the other hand, you never can tell. Look what

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the infusion of black sportsmen has done for cricket and football). Uncompromising integrated casting, however, cannot fail to have a beneficial impact on our society's racial attitudes.

While my principal concern here has been television drama, I would like to underline the point about sports coverage of television. Here it is impossible for the camera to ignore the great contribution made by black sportsmen and women. Consequently, many have become household names. Only the greatest diehard racist would object to Viv Richards living next door. Black sporting personalities are in the living rooms of the nation almost every night. That is good for everyone, from black youngsters in Brixton to old-age pensioners in Worthing. There is, of course, the tendency to say 'ah yes, but they are different'. It is just that tendency integrated casting would break down.

The one other barrier that has been removed is in the field of children's television. Here examples abound. There is hardly a children's programme which does not include blacks on its team. I fail to understand the double-think involved.

I refuse to believe there are no courageous, far-sighted people in television. It is an industry replete with young, intelligent and talented men and women. It is also an industry where people keep a wary eye over their shoulders. But, these courageous few must make a stand. Sooner or later they have to say 'I am in a responsible position, I have an obligation to society, I will stick my neck out.' There is no such thing as black acting, there is only acting.

# KARPOV V. KORCHNOI

## Graham Taylor

'Chess, like love, like music, has the power to make men happy' wrote Siegbert Tarrasch. Had he been writing today, in the light of the Karpov-Korchnoi world championship match, he might have been forced into a revision something along the lines of: 'Chess, like the cold war, like the BBC, has the power to make everyone thoroughly miserable.'

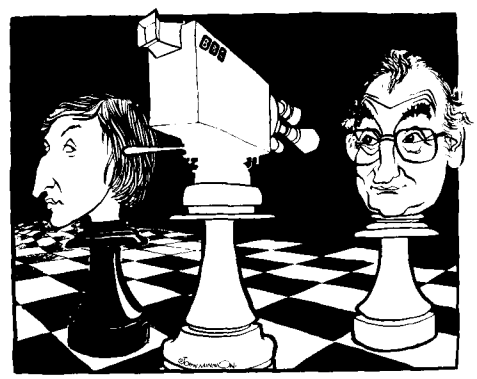
For not only BBC News but even the BBC's weekly chess programme started off its coverage of the match in a typical cold war posture: they backed Korchnoi the 'Soviet dissident'. As Korchnoi's play had declined in the last year and expert chess opinion had unanimously predicted his defeat long before the match started this meant two months of televised gloom and doom.

Years ago the BBC would never have landed itself in such a dire predicament because it simply ignored chess. Once upon a time, back in the 1960s, chess matches could be played in peace and a champion could even walk down the road without a press adviser. Chessplayers inhabited a select cultural backwater unruffled by either frantic publicity or by decent prizes. Bobby Fischer, American superstar, changed all that. By demanding millions of dollars for beating Soviet players at the game which they had virtually monopolised since 1947, he transformed chess tournaments into financial bonanzas. Since Fischer, over the last decade, nearly a dozen Soviet grandmasters — one of whom was Viktor Korchnoi — have 'defected to the West' in search of treasure trove. Chess, hitherto despised by the British media, suddenly became 'newsworthy'. The game had acquired two very acceptable features: self-made millionaires and cold war copy.

To arrive at a weekly chess programme, the BBC had to subject itself to some contortions. Back in the 1960s, for example, chess players were told that chess was not 'visual' enough for television. 'Laymen don't understand. We professionals in the media are not biased against chess because it is poor, unfashionable and dominated by the Soviet Union. It's a *technical* question. Such a slow, boring game can't be presented on television'. Instead, 1960s television devoted most of its sporting viewing to instant, thrill-a-minute . . . cricket.

The contortions continued in the first few programmes of the BBC's World Chess Championship series, which were almost entirely devoted to Korchnoi and which consisted of commentators surveying Korchnoi's lost positions with give-away lines such as 'there's not much hope. . . .'. A typical contortion: the BBC often uses the 'technical' argument against trade unionists on strike that 'inevitably' reporters gravitate towards the company spokesmen or the trade union officials because they are more accessible to interview, more personable and articulate. Yet, in this match, it was admitted that Anatoly Karpov was ever ready to grant interviews whereas Korchnoi gave only one. As for presentatiblity, Karpov is young, often colourfully dressed, speaks reasonable English and has a sense of humour conspiciously lacking in Korchnoi, who nonetheless got the lion's share of the coverage.

What was fascinating, however, was how the BBC — and some of the press — later modified their initial bias in the face of a wave of protest from chess fans. The first signs of it came when Hartston pointed out at the end of one programme: 'Of course there are *two* players in this match and I know some viewers have been concerned that we haven't made much mention of Karpov. 'Now, if it had been a football match, not to mention one player out of 22 might




have been understandable but in chess, as there are only two players anyway, not mentioning one of them verges somewhere near the absolutely ridiculous. But that was not the only obstacle the BBC had encountered.

For a start, it had soon become clear that, unlike the Czechoslovak grandmaster Ludek Pachman in 1968, Korchnoi was not a *'political* dissident' at all. Korchnoi's 'dissidence' amounts to little more than personal grievances against other Soviet players and, to the embarrassment of all concerned, against Ray Keene, his British second in the previous match with Karpov. Halfway through the match Korchnoi was fined for swearing: it turned out that the dissident's critique of Karpov amounted merely to: 'Stop squirming in your seat, you little creep.' Korchnoi's press adviser confirmed this personalised approach with the Machiavellian statement: 'We constantly make it plain that the main jailer of his (Korchnoi's) family is not the Soviet government but, personally, the champion of the world, Anatoly Karpov. We use this as psychological warfare.' This fits in with Korchnoi's autobiography, which offended many chessplayers by personally slurring such popular players as Mikhail Tal, and which revealed a political consciousness that was little more than snobbery. He criticised Karpov, for

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example, because, instead of hailing from the cosmopolitan intelligensia, he was 'working class and 150% Russian.'

The result of all this, together with Korchnoi's increasing involvement with the dubious Anand Marg religious sect, was that the BBC-2 programme reformed itself, in mid-air. It replied to the chess public's demand that it keep politics out of chess (the main complaint) by narrowing the 'dissidence' down to the plight of Korchnoi's family. Even here the ground was muddied. Korchnoi had left his family five years ago in the full knowledge that the strict Soviet emigration laws would prevent their joining him and had only recently made a determined effort to get them out.

Secondly, their treatment of Karpov was so upgraded that in the last programme it amounted almost to adulation. The cold war angle was still upheld with further criticisms of the USSR — equivalent to tennis commentators interspersing an Evonne Goolagong Wimbledon final with attacks on the Australian government's treatment of aborigines — but Karpov now received dispensation from the general anathema.

Thirdly, at the end, some apology was made for the initial bias. The main thrust of this was that Korchnoi, like Fischer, was a 'remarkable individual'. Hartston claimed it was the same in tennis: McEnroe got more coverage than Bjorn Borg. The trouble with this is, that Botvinnik and Tal were also 'remarkable individuals' and were certainly not rubber-stamps for the Soviet government, yet their world championships were never covered by a BBC special programme.

Moreover, although McEnroe got more coverage than Borg on BBC news it is simply not true that in the specialised tennis programme McEnroe got so much more attention that protests from tennis fans deluged the BBC.

Thus it was that the BBC checkmated itself. Chessplayers rejected the role of pawns in a propaganda game. The slogan of 'Keep politics out of sport', often used against the Left, well and truly rebounded. Although the cold war edge was maintained to the bitter end (only some radical political change will alter that) it was proved once again that, if the case is a sound one, pressure from below can have considerable impact. Misery was spread but in the end the BBC sounded more miserable than anybody else.

# CHANNEL 4

## Stuart Hood

In 1982 we shall have a fourth television channel. The prospect has caused a flurry of activity and hopes among people working in the medium who see in the Fourth Channel prospects of more scope for their ideas and talents, or at least the offer of an opening for programmes which up to now have not found a place in the schedules of the BBC or the ITV companies. Viewers, too, have been encouraged to think that the Fourth Channel will provide a different kind of television from what we are used to — which is undoubtedly wedded to old and tried formulas, to programmes which will on the whole tend to maximise audiences. The question is whether these hopes on the part of members of the audience and of workers in the medium are justified.

It is worth recalling in this connection that the Fourth Channel was originally campaigned for by a group of media people who wished it to function as a publishing agency that would take responsibility for the content of programmes in the same way as a book publishing firm would do. That is to say it would see that programmes were not in breach of the law but would not strive for balance in the views presented in the programmes. This model was accepted by the Annan Committee, which had been set up to look at the future of broadcasting, was given a cursory nod by the last Labour government just before it lost power, and was thrown out by the Tories. The initial and, it must be said, naive hopes hopes that in a time of economic crisis any government would willingly relax controls on broadcasting never looked like being fulfilled in practice. So the Fourth Channel will operate under the constraints of the Television Act which enjoins that programmes must, for instance, conform to 'good taste and decency' as interpreted by the Independent Broadcasting Authority, which has not in the past been a remarkably liberal body.

Undoubtedly the management of the Fourth Channel have good liberal intentions — although it is worth nothing that their liberalism extends to statements that extreme right-wing groups have a right to time on the air. What we can expect from them is a widening in the range of programmes, some changes in formats, perhaps more access and the opportunity to hear new voices. But they will work under the terms of the Television Act which while it encourages 'innovation and experiment' on the part of the new channel, also lays down that 'a proper balance of subject-matter' must be maintained. What a proper balance can mean is well illustrated by the case of Ken Loach's television film on the subject of the steel strike, *A Question of Leadership*. The programme took the form of excerpts from the very long discussion of the strike by steel workers and workers from BL; it brought to the screen the views of the shopfloor and let the viewers hear a voice that is usually heard only over the heads of the police cordons at the factory gates. The programme company for whom the film was made (it was ATV), acting under what Loach believes to have been strong suggestions from the IBA, insisted that 20 minutes be cut from the hour-long film on the grounds that the trade-union bureaucracy, which was heavily attacked by the workers, was not duly represented. There had therefore to be a studio discussion to include Bill Sirs, which conveniently replaced part of the film in which Alan Thornett of BL was prominent. There is no reason to believe, until evidence is provided to the contrary, that the control systems will be any less finely tuned in the case of the Fourth Channel.

The nature of the problem facing those who believe that the Fourth Channel may allow a radical change in British broadcasting is illustrated by the arrangements for news programming. The main feature is to be an hour-long package provided by ITN, which already provides the main news for the ITV channel. Clearly an hour-long newscast in the middle of the evening, will, in one sense, be an interesting new development in broadcasting. It will allow for wider coverage of events, for the treatment of news at present neglected or given scant and irregular coverage — business, industry, science, technology and the arts (in that order it seems); but the news items on these areas will have inherent in them the same assumptions about society as are to be found in the output of ITN today, which passes as being neutral and objective — 'duly impartial' as the Television Act puts it. News judgments about what is interesting and important will be made by the same news

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editors using the same criteria; the words used to define groups, parties, political tendencies and individuals will be chosen by the same sub-editors and the pictures will originate from the same agencies and cameramen as today supply the by no means unbiased illustrations that come up on our screens. In other words the ideology of the news will be unchanged. Strikers will no doubt continue to 'demand' and employers to 'offer'; we are unlikely on the Fourth Channel to see a story in which Michael Edwardes is said to have demanded that BL workers accept a cut in wages.

There have been suggestions that alternative methods of presenting news might be attempted. Different formats of news programmes are not too difficult to think up. One format might involve the discussion of the importance and relevance of news items; another might contain news presented by specific groups giving their view of some event in which they had been involved. They might be black people on the subject of Brixton or the Bristol riots; feminists on the coverage of the Ripper trial; trade unionists on the coverage of a strike. But how would such treatment of news conform to the concept of 'due impartiality' — a formulation which accepts the proposition that the present news is somehow, impartial, unbiased, objective and fair. It is a formulation based on the assumption which lies behind most journalistic practice that 'the news' is something neutral and objective waiting to be picked up by the finely-tuned antennae which constitute a journalist's 'news sense' and not something socially constructed (literally manufactured), and given the trademark of approval by the dominant ideology of our society. The danger for groups taking part in the making of alternative news programmes is that they might easily find themselves being neutralised and forced to work within the assumptions of 'the news'.

This dilemma points to the more general question of whether individuals or groups on the Left should attempt to work in and with the Fourth Channel. There is a purist view, which is also a pessimistic one, that says any such attempt is useless and indeed wrong in principle. Another view is that the institutions are not monolithic and that cracks and contradictions in the monolith must be exploited. This is the argument persuasively advanced by people like Ken Loach or Michael Grigsby who, in the field of documentary, contrive to get programmes on the screen which manage to make statements — in Grigsby's case, for instance, about the repressive nature of Indira Gandhi's government and working class resistance to it — which otherwise would not get on the air. But such achievement very often involves a degree of self-censorship — or indeed the acceptance of censorship from above. The answer probably is that cases have to be fought individually and that the fight for the right to make certain statements should always be documented, for the authorities would prefer their attempts to apply pressure not to be on the record. There will be some successes and some defeats from both of which useful lessons will be learned. What is important to remember is that the process will take place in circumstances where the Government is actively pursuing a strategy aimed at breaking the power of the unions and weakening the working class by an attack on wages and by the weapon of unemployment. The present Tory government is in a very different situation and mood from the Macmillan

government under which — during the 'you've never had it so good' boom — broadcasting institutions in Britain were able to pursue an expansionist policy in terms of programming. Today, as the broadcasters know, the consensus within which debate can take place on the air has narrowed. That is the atmosphere in which the Fourth Channel will take the air.

What is not often discussed is the role of the companies of the ITV network in the management and policies of the Fourth Channel. They have been strongly represented on the Fourth Channel board; they will sell advertising time on the Fourth Channel and will look to advertising revenue from it to reimburse them and to provide a profit. It is one of the curiosities of the present economic situation that there appears to be no lack of money for advertising; the agencies are reported to be delighted at the prospect of a new outlet on the Fourth Channel and for the AB audience which it is expected to deliver. There is, however, a particular logic in commercial advertising on television; that is that the cost per thousand — what it costs an advertiser to expose 1000 viewers to his commercial — must not be too high. It is a logic that normally leads to maximisation of audiences. It may be that the advertisers and the programme companies will be content with a relatively small but up-market viewership, corresponding to the readership of the Sunday colour supplements. But the commercial interests involved will wish to have a satisfactory return on their investment. If the innovatory programmes, which the new channel must provide under the Act, do not draw sufficiently large audiences no doubt there will be pressures for 'innovation' of a kind that does pull in the viewers. There are those who believe that the companies will wait to see whether the new Channel has proved capable of delivering the required audiences and if not will step in to save it; they have already set up 'independent' production companies which could supply the programmes. More pessimistic observers think there may be a danger that they will take preemptive action on the ground that the programme policy is unsatisfactory and will apply pressure to hinder radical programme initiatives. Such are the rumours in an industry given to the manufacture of rumours as much as to the manufacture of programmes. But they are rumours which, on the past performance of the big commercial television companies, do not lack plausibility.

What must always be remembered, when considering the possibilities of the Fourth Channel is the relationship of broadcasting institutions as we know them and as they exist in most countries, is that their relationship to the state is a close one. There may be a degree of mediation through Boards of Governors, for instance — but the duties of the institutions towards society are clear and clearly understood by those men and women who are chosen from a very limited sample of the population to run them. Broadcasting is certainly one area in which attempts can be made to challenge the hegemony of the ideology which is used to hold our society together; the Fourth Channel may conceivably provide an opportunity to challenge that ideology at some times and in some programmes; but we should not look to the new Channel for any sustained critique of our society or indeed of our media. Nor must we fall into an error, of which workers in the medium as well as those who theorise about the medium are sometimes guilty — namely that of suggesting that by changing the most widely-used of the media we can somehow change society. Those who approach the Fourth Channel in that belief are likely to learn a sharp political lesson.

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Discussion

# Can Labour Succeed?

Robin Blackburn

In the October issue of *Marxism Today,* Dave Priscott contributed a very interesting, but also deeply conservative article entitled: 'Can Labour Succeed?'. The heart of the conservatism in this article was summed up in the following sentences: 'All past and present experience shows that the Left in the CLPs and the PLP, no matter how sincere and eloquent, always takes a hammering in Labour Party Conferences if major trade unions vote against them. *You cannot solve that problem by wishing that our Labour Party had a different structure to that given it by history.* And to suggest that the problem should be tackled by a left campaign to reduce the voting strength of trade unions at Conference, relative to the voting strength of the CLPs, means to open up damaging antagonisms between the Left and the trade union movement . . .' (my emphasis).

We welcome Discussion contributions on articles appearing in the journal. They should not exceed 2000 words and preferably be much shorter. Contributions should be sent as soon as possible after the appearance of an article.

Let's start off with a small point. In this quote, and elsewhere in the article, Dave Priscott refers to 'our' Labour Party. Is this not a very misleading way of writing about a party from which most of the Marxist Left has always been excluded, and which does not even belong in any real sense to its own members? The active members of the Labour Party have little more than a one tenth say in its affairs. Labour Party Conferences are dominated by the trade union block vote, effectively wielded by a tiny group of trade union officials, while the Parliamentary Labour Party remains largely a law unto itself, with its own policies and leadership separate from those of the rest of the Party. Recent attempts to democratise Labour, and to make the MPs more accountable, are very welcome but they have only begun to change Labour's essential workings. It is much too early to write as if the official structures of the Labour party were an authentic expression of the socialist movement, or 'belonged' to working people.

The advice I have quoted from Dave Priscott encourages a passive and fatalistic attitude to the undemocratic and unsocialist features of the Labour Party's structure and history. The recent reforms show that these structures can be changed. Indeed, everything in British politics, not excluding the Labour Party given us 'by history', is now subject to an imperative law of change. It would be more accurate to invert Priscott's fatalism and concede that, whatever the Left does, the structure of the Labour Party is extremely unlikely to survive the next five years. It is, for example, quite possible that the next government will introduce 'contracting in' as the basis for trade union contributions to the Labour party and will also adopt a system of proportional representation in national elections. Even if such changes are not imposed from outside they are still likely to emerge from within. Neither the Left, the Centre nor the Right are now happy with the way the trade union block vote operates and even trade union leaders do not welcome the spotlight which the present system shines on their internal workings. So, for a mixture of good and bad reasons, the Labour Party itself will continue to change and the least likely hypothesis is that we will simply have to put up with the way things have always been done.

The structure of the Labour Party is not a sort of family heirloom which we should look forward to handing on to our children. It is, as it has always been, a massive obstacle to the development of socialist politics in this country. The many and diverse faults of the Labour Party's structure have been criticised in a variety of compelling ways by socialists and I do not here intend to rehearse all of them: see for example, Tom Nairn's essay 'Anatomy of the Labour Party'[1], or Ralph Miliband's *Parliamentary Socialism.* Invariably they have stressed the conservative implications of the block vote system.

It is true that the main failing of the Labour Party — the fact that it is mortgaged to trade union officialdom — has also been a source of a certain historic strength. The Labour Party, because of the nature of its institutional links, never drifted quite so far to the right as some other social democratic parties. Yet even this guarantee is being eroded by changes in the class structure and in the structure of the trade unions themselves. The traditional corporate class consciousness embodied by the trade unions, and so heavily relied upon by the Labour Party in the past, is now being rapidly eroded by changes in the labour process and the composition of the working class, by deindustrialisation and unemployment, by consumerist propaganda and the new 'consciousness industry'. These forces are contradictory, and their reactionary aspect can be resisted, but not by retreating into the crumbling edifice of Labourism.

## Party and trade unions

Dave Priscott rightly says that the Left must be concerned *'to organise to change the thinking of masses of people'* (my emphasis). But does he believe that the Labour Party is now so organised? Priscott concedes that trade unions should represent *all* workers, whatever their political outlook. Priscott would agree that trade unions should democratically reflect the wishes of their members.

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Does he therefore suggest that the policies pursued by a socialist party should be determined by '*all* workers . . . regardless of their politics, regardless of ideology'? Such a view would be close to the populist theory of democracy embodied by the primary system in the United States. If a political party simply reflects all the confusion already present in the electorate, paradoxically, this denies the possibility of popular choice. If active parrty members do not work to devise coherent party programmes, between which voters can choose, there can be no effective democracy. The creative task of forging popular anti-capitalist programmes and policies cannot be sub-contracted out to organisations with a quite different function. If this is attempted, the real choices will be determined by the media and by full-time officials.

There is, of course, every reason for trade unions to seek to organise in unions even the most backward workers, but it is then scarcely appropriate to make them the masters of a party which claims to be working for distinctively socialist aims.

Dave Priscott should ask himself why no other European workers' party, whether Communist or Socialist, gives trade unions a decisive say in its internal affairs. Until recently Labour was the only such party in which MPs alone chose the Leader. The truth is that the constitution of the Labour Party, like that of the British bourgeois state itself, is designed to represent corporate interests, to stave off change until the last possible moment and to stifle every radical impulse.

Dave Priscott argues that because trade unions are class organisations they furnish the ideal terrain upon which to advance socialist politics. They do, of course, furnish a crucial arena for socialist politics but it is quite wrong to imply that there are not very many other arenas: the community, the family, the workplace considered in wider terms, the media, the claimants queue, places of entertainment or recreation and so forth. Thus Priscott writes: 'When individual workers, or groups of workers, are influenced by socialist ideas, they generally express that political understanding within the trade union movement as, to them, the "natural" arena within which to fight for such ideas.' This has distinct echoes of syndicalism and economism. Traditionally trade unions have been mainly concerned with quite narrow objectives, even in the workplace. A socialist should encourage a wider range of objectives but, even in the best of cases, there should be much more to socialist culture, and to an authentically anti-capitalist popular movement, than can possibly be furnished by good trade unionism.

The syndicalist implications in Dave Priscott's article were probably unintended and were in any case qualified by his references to the tasks of the Communist Party. One could almost say that Dave Priscott does not think that the Labour Party need become a socialist party because the Communist Party already exists to carry out all the functions of such a party. In this view the Labour Party could remain a sort of hybrid mass organisation, leaving the more ambitious tasks of political agitation, education and illumination to the organised Marxists outside it. I do not deny that historically this is the way things have been. Quite apart from the fact that, as indicated above, things are changing, there is a powerful objection to remaining content with the present state of affairs. The Labour Party still commands a far wider authority, and much greater resources, than all the groups of the Marxist Left put together. If Labour leaders and MPs continue to frustrate or muffle socialist politics then our chances of changing 'the political thinking of masses of people' are seriously cut down. As things are at present the Left has few means of presenting a comprehensive and coherent socialist alternative to large numbers of people. We would certainly be in a better position if the Labour Party gave genuine expression to the views of its membership.

**A socialist party**

Watching this year's Labour Party Conference I was reminded of the saying that inside every fat man there's a thin man struggling to get out. Inside the curious hulk of the Labour Party there is a socialist party struggling to get out. On every important vote taken there was the most striking ocular proof of the structural frustration of the party's living members by its 'dead souls'. This was most evident in the vote on the deputy leadership, in the vote on NATO and in the vote for the NEC. Moreover one of the quaint customs of the Labour Party is to give trade union officialdom not only its own seats on the NEC but also to allow it to select which woman shall be elected to the women's section!

One of the worst arguments used to defend the trade union block vote is that as they pay the piper they should call the tune. Even bourgeois parties do not give their financial backers votes at the party conference, while other workers' parties attract finance from the trade unions without sacrificing their own democratic deliberative procedures. It is interesting to note that the trade union contribution to Labour's finances has been declining; if the expenditure of the constituency parties is taken into account, and not simply those of the national office, then soon trade union affiliation fees will account for less than half of the total. Thus even the argument from cash cannot justify the present allocation of votes.

It would not be appropriate in this comment to spell out alternatives to the block vote system. Obviously Labour women will have to elect their own representatives. Possibly the Labour Party's new workplace branches could provide the best way of giving socialist trade unionists the important say they should have in the Party's affairs. The precise alternatives and practicalities implied by the changes now forced upon Labour must be the subject of a wide-ranging discussion. But of one thing we may be sure. The tens of thousands of socialists active in the Labour Party are not going to tolerate the present set-up simply because it is familiar and convenient to some socialists outside the Labour Party.

In conclusion I would like to agree with some of the points made by Dave Priscott in his concluding paragraphs. Changes at the level of the 'machinery of the movement' will by no means be adequate to kindling a popular commitment to socialism. The democratisation of the structures of the Labour movement would represent a gain partly because the present regime infantilises the Left and imposes narrow preoccupations upon it. But, as Raymond Williams argued in the November issue of *New Socialist,* the Left must give much more importance to educational work, to strengthening the links between policy, popular struggle and socialist culture. Dave Priscott reminds us of the role played by the Left Book Club in preparing the way for the radicalisation registered at the 1945 election. As he points out it 'helped to shape the political thinking of a whole generation'; with its active local groups it was, of course, much more than a book club. Regaining the initiative for socialist ideas today will, as Raymond Williams suggests, require an organisation of a similar type, and would itself be a vital precondition for the building of a popular socialist movement. And as part of this educational process we are bound to have a continuing debate on the forms of organisation which best express the creative power of working people, and which are most conducive to general human emancipation. □

[1] First published in *Critica Marxista* in 1964 this essay may now be read in *Revolution and Class Struggle: a reader in Marxist politics,* edited by R. Blackburn.

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# Reviews

## SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1945-1948

**Martin Myant**

Cambridge University Press 1981 *hb £20*
*ISBN O 521 23668 1*

The brief period of 1945-48 in Czechoslovakia has a significance far beyond the boundaries of time and place. Its culmination in the events of February 1948 was seen at the time as a landmark in the developing cold war, but today it is the nature of the country's postwar revolution which is of particular interest. Varying interpretations have been advanced, frequently lacking in objectivity because they were required to fit some preconceived pattern. For instance, the official version in post-1948 Czechoslovakia, which was generally accepted in the communist movement of the day, was formualted in terms of a two-stage process leading through the 'February victory' to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and advance towards Soviet-type socialism. This course was described as a truly Marxist policy consciously pursued by the communist leaders. In that view, what Martin Myant refers to in the introduction to his book as 'a unique example of a democratically-elected multi-party government implementing socialist changes in what, then, was one of the most advanced countries in Europe,' was no more than a temporary phase to be passed through before instituting the one true model.

When in later years, however, it was becoming increasingly obvious that the post-1948 model was incapable of giving the Czechoslovak people the kind of socialism they needed, the old stereotype carried less conviction among genuine Marxist thinkers. During the 1960s historians began to take a new look at the subject. Unfortunately much of their work remains scattered in the historical journals. Martin Myant's detailed research, drawing on original sources as well as the works of Western authors is therefore particularly valuable. Moreover, in starting with an outline of the development of the Czechoslovak Communist Party from 1918 up to the liberation in 1945, and an account of the wartime German occupation, he provides a background for understanding the strategies of the various political groupings after the war. Some insight is given into the fluctuating fortunes of attempts within the Communist Party to find a socialist strategy suited to the country's special needs, in opposition to the dominant Comintern policies — a pattern to emerge again in the postwar years. A fuller treatment of this theme would certainly be rewarding.

The substance of the work is concerned, however, with the 'national revolution' of May 1945 and its development. The author is at pains to reveal the complexity of the process, which cannot, he argues, be reduced to a simple takeover of power by one class from another. The account of how the multi-party coalition was established and how it worked offers, despite the specific circumstances of the day, some useful ideas when considering the strategy for democratic socialist advance in Western Europe. The discussion of the class forces, the role of the working class and the social content of the revolution, the nationalities question, the policies on nationalisation and industrial management, and related matters contains many points that are relevant today. The section on factory councils and the trade unions is of particular interest.

A matter of special interest in Czechoslovakia has been whether the political and economic order that was evolving between 1945 and 1948 could be described as a specific 'Czechoslovak road to socialism'. This was of more than academic interest in 1968, when the pre-1948 period was seen by many as a model to be developed into a new form of democratic socialism. Although in the immediate post-war period, Gottwald and the communist leadership insisted that there was no question of socialism, that what was taking place was purely a 'national and democratic revolution', they did later begin to speak of a 'special road to socialism . . . a longer, more complicated road', not via 'the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviets', a view elaborated in particular after Stalin's famous interview with British Labour Party leaders when he spoke of two possible roads. But what kind of socialism did they envisage at the end of the road? Were they intending to go over to the Societ model once their position had been secured, as their partners in government suspected? In any case, whatever the intentions, was there at least the potential for advancing to a specific Czechoslovak model?

In Myant's view, the evidence shows there was no clear-cut view. On balance it looks as if only the road was seen as new, leading to the accepted aim of a Soviet-type monopoly of power in the end. Nevertheless, the broad and flexible policies adopted by the Party, at least up to 1947, reveal two developments that could, in the author's opinion, have led to the evolution of new aims — these were the renunciation of the idea that a complete takeover of power was necessary for any advance to socialism, and the recognition that advance could be gradual. Some Czechoslovak writers on the period have, in fact, described it as a 'distant prototype' for the later, more developed theories of 'Eurocommunism'.

In the event, external and internal factors intervened to sharpen the tensions within the multi-party coalition, leading to the radical switch of course which took place in February 1948.

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So many conflicting and heavily politically biased accounts of the 'February events' have been written that Martin Myant's careful marshalling of the available evidence is of particular value. The picture that emerges is more complex than any of the usual simplistic views. The same goes for the developments in post-February Czechoslovakia. The consolidation of power by the victorious Communist Party was not a matter of immediately imposing the Soviet model in all respects. In fact there was more discussion among communists immediately after February than there had been when fighting 'reaction' was seen as the main task (for instance, as the writer of this review recalls, on the theory and practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat) and the idea was still one of a fairly slow road to socalisim, avoiding dictatorial methods. But in the face of economic difficulties and workers' discontent, and external pressures, this stage was short-lived. The stage was already being set for the repressions, persecution and political trials of the 1950s.

Here the question of inevitability is raised. Does the socialist road, however gradual and democratic, inevitably lead to 'totalitarianism'? The Czechoslovak experience of 1948 can only lead to that conclusion if the impact of the cold war and the shift in Soviet foreign policy at the time are discounted. The author argues that other alternatives were available even then, and he concludes that 'a party theoretically equipped to be aware of the dangers that lay ahead would have avoided crushing all opposition, diversity of opinions and effective public participation'. His book can certainly be valuable in helping to clarify some of these questions for our movement today.

**Marian Sling**

## Other books received

**A sample of some of the better books received.**

**DYNAMICS OF EUROPEAN NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT**
**A Myrdal** *et al* Spokesman £5.50 pbk

**SOCIALIST REGISTER 1981**
**R Miliband and J Saville**
Merlin Press £4.50 pbk

**CAPITAL VOLUME 3**
**K Marx** Penguin £6.95 pbk

**ALIENATION: PROBLEMS OF MEANING THEORY AND METHOD**
**R Geyer and D Schweitzer**
Routledge Kegan Paul £12.50 pbk

**ELEVENTH HOUR FOR EUROPE**
**K Coates** *et al* Spokesman £3.25 pbk

**THE ABCs OF SOVIET SOCIALISM**
**J R Millar**
University of Illinois Press £3.75 pbk

**K. MARX AND F. ENGELS COLLECTED WORKS VOLUMES 16, 17**
Lawrence and Wishart £5 each hbk

**ON TELEVISION**
**S Hood** Pluto Press £2.95 pbk

**Now issued in paperback**
**THE FISCAL CRISIS OF THE STATE**
**J O'Connor** Macmillan £4.95

**MAIN CURRENTS OF MARXISM, 3 VOLUMES**
**L Kolakowski**
Oxford University Press £3.95 each

# NOTES

### POETS AGAINST THE BOMB

*Francis Fuchs writes:* 'Poets Against the Bomb' is a half-hour colour film based on an event organised by Kensington and Chelsea CND on April 15 last year. It presents performances by Pete Brown, Ivor Cutler, Gavin Ewart, Ruth Fainlight, Roy Fisher, Niki Jackowska, Judith Kazantsis, Phyllis King, Adrian Henri, Eddie Linden, Adrian Mitchell, Brian Patten and Harold Pinter.

In grappling with the theme which brought them together on this unique occasion, the poets' imaginations produced images of joy, romance and compassion as well as apocalyptic horror. The film captures the jokes and rhymes of the evening as well as its sense of aesthetic outrage. It also conveys some of the special magic of a live reading with an appreciative audience.

The film had its premiere in November as part of the London Film Festival, and is now available for showing at meetings and other events; it can be booked through Barbara Somerville, 34 Dryleys Court, Goldings, Northampton, tel: 0604 48930.

The message of 'Poets Against the Bomb' is in the end both optimistic and affirmative, a re-assertion of the values of which the bomb is negation.

'You kiss me and tell me you love me
By the light of the last setting sun.
We'll both be up early tomorrow;
A new universe has begun.' (A. Henri)

### MARXISM TODAY

*Dave Grant writes:* In the November issue of *Marxism Today* we asked for your help in making the magazine a success in the newsagents by monitoring sales and availability. The response by the readership was far beyond our expectations, and we would like to thank all readers throughout Britain for their support. Sales have been boosted by the efforts of many different people in Sheffield, Motherwell, Birmingham, Newcastle, Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford, London, Glasgow, Cardiff and a lot of other places.

To help maintain this vital work please contact *Marxism Today,* 16 St John St, London EC1, tel: 01-251 4406.

### HALF MOON THEATRE

*Katie Venner writes:* The Half Moon is one of the most enterprising and exciting of London's fringe theatres. Its programme of plays, with a consistent socialist flavour, has challenged any of those offered by the major West End theatres.

Now the Half Moon is moving from its old theatre in Alie Street to a new site on the Mile End Road, E1. The new theatre complex will include a 400 seat theatre, a community and social centre and a permanent home for the Half Moon Young People's Theatre. To finance this project we have launched an appeal for £1,200,000. £260,000 has already been made available to us by the company which is developing our old site as offices, and this will enable us to start on the first phase of our development.

However, much more is needed. If you are interested in further information about the Appeal fund, please contact: Katie Venner, Appeal Manager, Half Moon Theatre on 01-791 1141/4.

### TRAINING POLICIES

*Barry Lovejoy writes:* Last year many large employers of building apprentices took on their lowest number of new apprentices since the war. This situation has very serious implications for the future — any sustained expansion in the construction industry could be prevented by a shortage of skilled building workers.

This problem is highlighted in a new

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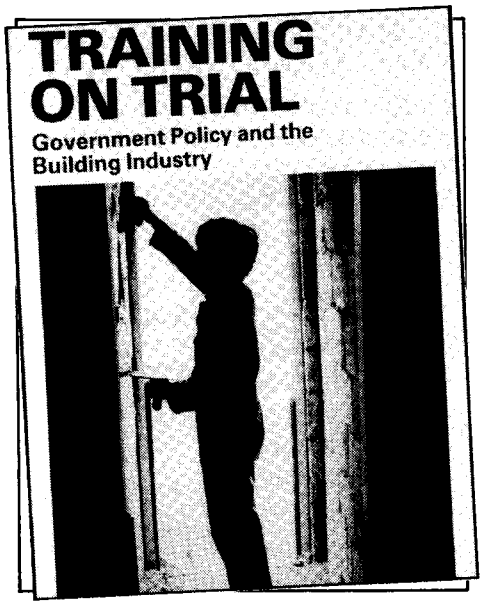
# Notes




report from the Training Research Group of the Conference of Socialist Economists. Entitled 'Training on Trial; Government Policy and the Building Industry', it pins the blame for the present crisis on a number of government policies, including housing costs, attacks on local government spending programmes and the present emphasis of youth unemployment measures.

The report presents the results of a survey of training in local council building departments and offers a number of policies aimed at preventing shortages of skilled labour. In addition, however, it argues that the labour movement needs to develop a socialist perspective on training, and not simply limit its demands to increased training levels. Such a policy might include greater rights and protection for trainees, guaranteed standards of training, more flexibility and special provisions to make training schemes more easily available and more attractive to women and older workers.

The report costs £1.50 (including postage) and is available from: Training Research Group, 30 Antrobus Road, Handsworth, Birmingham 21.

## RACISM AND WORK

*Molly Zak writes:* One welcome outcome of last summer's inner city disturbances has been a growing recognition of the ways in which racism is built into all areas of life in Britain — housing, policing, education, etc. Particularly important is the issue of racism in employment practices and the workplace.

In order to promote a better understanding of the problems of racism at work, and to develop strategies to combat it, the National Race Relations Committee of the Communist Party has organised a conference on 'Racism and Work' on Saturday January 30.

Amongst the issues which will be tackled are apprenticeships, promotion, the Nationality Act, language training, the role of equal opportunity policies, black workers' involvement in the trade unions and the TUC Black Workers' Charter. It is hoped to draw to the conference people from a wide range of backgrounds, particularly workers — black and white — who are active in their workplaces, trade unions or in anti-racist movements.

The main sessions of the conference will be opened by Ken Gill who chairs the TUC Equal Rights Committee, and Wally Brown from the Merseyside Community Relations Council. Other participants will include Jayaben Desai, Winston Pinder, Vishnu Sharma, Prem Singh, Jack Dromey, Avtar Jouhl and Dave Cook. Plenty of opportunity will be given for discussion and contributions.

The conference is being held at the NUFTO Hall, 14 Jockey's Fields, London WC1; the fee is £1.00. Individuals or organisations wishing to attend should contact Molly Zak, 16 St John St, London EC1, tel: 01-251 4406.

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Contributions to *Notes* (brief please) are welcome. We need copy by the 1st of the month preceding publication.

**Feminism for Girls**

*An Adventure Story*

**Edited by**

**ANGELA McROBBIE and TRISHA McCABE**

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